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Number 76 Summer 1988

Roundtable on Communitarianism
Anderson, Piccone, Siegel and Taves

Fach and Procacci: *Strong Liberalism*
Fischer and Mandell: *Relegitimating Meritocracy*
Tim Luke: *The Dreams of Deep Ecology*
Antonio and Knapp: *Democracy and Abundance*

D'Amico and Layon: *AIDS and The Politics of Morbidity*
Gottfried: *Selectively Remembering the 1960s*
Roe: *Management Crisis in the New Class*
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Delfini: *Remaking Love: Undoing Women?*
Kasinitz: *Facing up to The Underclass*
Good: *Beyond the American Dream*
Pollak: *Politics and Rhetoric*

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*Roundtable on Communitarianism**

Ken Anderson, Paul Piccone,
Fred Siegel, Michael Taves

Taves: We are here to discuss a range of social and political issues which can be subsumed under the rubric of *communitarianism*, and which are increasingly rising to the top of various political agendas.

What is this *communitarianism*? While this question is undoubtedly open to a variety of possible answers, let me propose a simple working description. Communitarianism refers to those political sentiments sometimes associated with populism. It involves an attempt to recapture political control in local communities, to reconstruct the social basis to support stable family structures, i.e., to provide a totalizing context for social existence and personal identity. It could be characterized as "a will to overcome" the overbearing reality of normless isolation in mass society — a reality often attributed to the rise of liberalism and secularism and the resulting supremacy of individual rights over the "common good." It is important to remember, however, that to the extent the very idea of traditional communities carries with it restrictions on personal freedom (in such areas as mobility, privacy and altering one's social position) most people today would chafe under the communitarian yoke.

Assuming it is somehow desirable, is *authentic* communitarianism — if by that we mean restoring the "organic" basis for real community, political control, extended family ties, and the social-familial basis for individual identity — a *real* possibility? Before we tackle this question, I suggest we begin with trying to ascertain why communitarianism has become an important political issue today.

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* This is the transcript of a discussion held July 25, 1988 in the *Telos* office in New York City.

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Piccone: To understand the reasons for the resurfacing of communitarianism *as a political issue today* requires a careful examination of the history of the past half century, particularly in relation to the fate of the New Deal. Under a variety of different labels, communitarianism has, in one way or another, dominated political philosophy for the past two centuries — at least since the French Revolution. Through most of the 19th and 20th centuries, both the Left and the Right have sought to reverse or buffer the disintegrating consequences of liberalism, industrialism and capitalism by either re-proposing the traditional order or projecting new types of community structures. In the US, because of its peculiar history, the issue really came to the fore with the Great Depression and the inability of existing government —tailored to the requirements of a bygone *laissez-faire* capitalism — to effectively deal with the economic crisis.

Seen from this perspective, it is clear why communitarianism as a project of social reconstruction is tied neither to the Left nor to the Right. In the 1930s it was a Leftist project culminating in the New Deal, while in the 1980s it was successfully appropriated by the Right and translated into the electoral successes of "Reagan's revolution." Today both major political parties appeal to it, or to its substantive values, to anchor their respective programs without, it must be added, any objective possibilities whatsoever of translating this rhetoric into any meaningful policies.

This does not mean that both the Left and the Right are or were in any sense interested in the same thing. The forces seeking restoration after the fall of Napoleon (or, more recently, the Republican Party's traditional corporate supporters) were primarily interested in reintroducing the hierarchy and privileges the French Revolution had destroyed (or, today, earlier forms of social stratification eliminated by New Deal or Great Society legislation), while Leftist groups, whether Marxist, Utopian-Socialist, or anarchist, were instead concerned with a new egalitarian social identity and a new socio-economic arrangement conducive to the constitution of such an identity.

At any rate, the real common enemy was the new order in all its manifestations: capitalism in economics, liberalism in politics, protestantism in religion, industrialism in production, Enlightenment ideology in philosophy, etc. The Marxist solution, by far the most powerful and most consequential in terms of subsequent historical developments, consisted in ontologizing the *economic* dimension as constitutive and decisive for every other domain (now reduced to the level of epiphenomena), and in projecting a homogenizing proletarian revolution as paving the way for a collective subjectivity (Lukács' subject-object identity). This materialist transubstantiation of Hegel's God would automatically reintegrate the atomized fragments generated by previous class societies within an all-inclusive super-community modeled after the Christian notion of heaven. The Utopian-Socialist solution actually was, paradoxically enough (for Marx and Engels, at least), much more realistic in focusing primarily on restructuring *social* relations, without having to confront the insurmountable

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task of constituting a qualitatively new individuality by sheer economic means. And even the anarchist solution of reinstituting a pre-modern, pre-industrial society of autonomous individuals did not entail so much problematic metaphysical baggage as did the Marxist project.

In some way or other, all these models have had an opportunity to play themselves out in the 20th century, with very problematic consequences. Utopian-Socialist communities did not seem able to sustain themselves for very long (although, often, failure was a result of extreme external hostility); attempts to return to pre-modern communities have either fizzled into irrelevance or, in the most extreme cases, precipitated holocausts such as in Cambodia; while the Marxist solution has generated the well-known nightmares of Stalinism.

Without indulging in endless debates about the inevitability of Stalinism as the logical outcome of *any* variety of Marxism, it is clear that Marxism implies a dictatorship over needs and, consequently, a degree of coercion very few people accustomed to liberal societies are willing to accept. And here is the rub. While one need not go as far as identifying Stalinism with the reconstitution of communities to make the point, traditional communities *do* constitute personal identities and provide the kind of psychologically supportive context which today is so rare to find, but at a price few are willing to pay (for those who can afford it, psychotherapy is often a preferable alternative). Freedom is too valuable, and one quickly realizes just how valuable it is when it begins to erode. Communitarianism, whether one likes it or not, entails considerable erosion not only of personal freedom but of privacy, mobility, etc.

To return to the specific question concerning the resurfacing of communitarianism in today's political agendas, it clearly has to do with the failure of the New Deal as a *national communitarian project*. Historically the US, because of its ethnic, racial and religious diversity, limited government to a role outside of pre-existing communities which, as established historical formations, were almost accepted as natural units and thus granted a great deal of space for self-determination. But the Great Depression rendered this hitherto desirable and viable arrangement obsolete, and precipitated the stage that follows when "civil society" exhausts itself in the Hegelian logic: the strong state. The New Deal came about to reconstitute a rapidly disintegrating *economic* framework of civil society, and it was successful in doing so for over 40 years (thanks primarily to WWII and military Keynesianism) by, ironically enough, accelerating further *social* disintegration and thereby eventually undermining any possibility of long-range socio-economic stability. Furthermore, as in Marx's critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, the bureaucracy — or the state — did not turn out to be a *neutral* social formation merely regulating an autonomous civil society, but penetrated it through and through to the point of so effectively (but unintentionally) destroying internal regulatory mechanisms that it eventually undermined the very possibility of self-reproduction. The new massive state apparatus generated a powerful New Class, a bureaucratic-managerial elite, concerned primarily with advancing its own interests and political agendas to

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the point of increasingly paralyzing that very civil society it sought to regulate and direct with excessive costs, waste, and external constraints.

The resurgence of conservatism in the last decade is due primarily to its having successfully proposed a rehabilitation of "civil society" (under more domestically accessible codes such as "the entrepreneurial spirit," "private enterprise" or "local communities") against further statist encroachments. The failure of the so-called "Reagan revolution" is due primarily to the fact that, as it turned out, having been destroyed during the last 70-80 years by capitalist development (consumerism, homogenization, Americanization, etc.) there was no longer a sufficiently strong civil society able to take over various socio-economic functions once the state pulled back. This naive reliance on non-existing grass-root communities and autonomous organizations — or civil society — gradually deteriorated to the only feasible course of action: the extension of the existing statist system under a conservative-libertarian rhetorical cover. And this is why communitarianism remains on the agenda for both major parties. It evokes the vision of a New Deal national community with its promise of security and solidarity for the Democrats, and a memory of social order and stable normative structures for the Republicans. However, to the extent that the preconditions for the reconstitution of any viable organic community are hardly addressed, i.e., the constitution of a sufficiently strong individuality able to sustain formal liberal institutions and participate in informal, autonomous community life, any appeal to communitarian ideology remains romantic nostalgia and empty rhetoric.

Siegel: While generally correct, this account is a little too broad. Interest in the problem of community in America has come in cycles. The current revival of interest in community resembles the period around WWI, when the issues of immigration, language and the environment were central. Our current wave of interest is a response to A) the vast increase in immigration — both legal and illegal — since 1965; and B) the creation in the past 20 years of vast new trans-suburban private towns and residential developments.

Community in America has traditionally had two locales: the small towns and the ethnic city neighborhoods. But in the 1950s there was a partially successful attempt to recreate a sense of community in suburbia. Community in suburbia was the flip side of the conformity that so frightened the *savants* of the 1960s.

Suburbanites of the 1950s tended to define themselves and be defined by others in terms of a common way of life and shared sense of values. Driven by the emotional costs of war and depression, they were drawn to structure and security. Loyal to their organizations, their neighbors and family, these people actually seemed to enjoy socializing in their backyards. Oh, the horror of it all! But not to worry, these nefarious trends were quickly sniffed out by William H. Whyte, C. W. Mills, and thousands of other cliché-mongers who followed. Mistaking the moment for a millenial fate, they proceeded to rail on and on about the loss of individualism. They need not have worried. Today's "new breed"

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of suburbanites are highly mobile professionals, characterized by a palsied sense of affiliation. Weaned on the "classic" texts of the 1960s, the "Me Generation" has, by its absence of social ties, produced a new concern with community.

Let me shift gears a bit and turn from the sociological to the intellectual basis for a revival of interest in community. It is in part a response to the creation of a rights-based political culture over the past quarter century. For rights theorists like Ronald Dworkin, community and a rights-based politics are fully compatible. But that is largely because the concept of community invoked by Dworkin has no connection, law professors and their students aside, to any actual communities. For those who are at least partially grounded in the empirical world, there is a sharp and growing tension between the supremacy of individual rights (cut free of obligation), which serve to trump any evocation of the common good, and the social comity necessary for even a weak sense of community.

Whether the subject is crime, drugs or AIDS, there are, particularly in big cities, widespread fears of social breakdown. One indication of this can be found in the *Rolling Stone* poll. Many of the children of the 1960s are horrified by the decline in the quality of social life. They are frightened by what they helped to create. And now they are looking to recreate new forms of mutuality.

Anderson: I basically agree with Piccone's historical account of the communitarianism debate as going back centuries and, today, as being rooted in the collapse of the New Deal and the subsequent reaction to the welfare state. Yet, that is not enough to answer the original question: "Why now?" "Communitarianism" collapses a number of concerns. Consider the contrast Siegel has aptly pointed out between the "communitarian" concern to create a national culture, popular among academics, and "localism," which is also invoked by means of communitarian rhetoric because of communitarianism's roots in small-town communities and urban neighborhoods. An extreme example of this contrast can be found in Guatemala; the military tries to destroy indigenous communities in order to create a national community around the flag, the *Patria*, and military service. Indian partisans, on the other hand, call for preservation of the indigenous community against outside encroachment. Both sides use the same rhetoric, but they slide between two conceptions of the "community."

Communitarianism, however, is also invoked by people advocating traditional communities, what Piccone on occasion has called "totalizing" or "constitutive" communities, i.e., communities into which people are born, or are related by religion or family. Those communities provide a totalizing experience — they give meaning to life. At the same time, they can be physically and psychologically coercive, defined by exclusion and, as liberals never cease to point out, inclined to war with neighboring communities.

From the viewpoint of liberal theory, these traditional communities are significant because they are *pre-conceptual*. In this they differ radically from voluntary associations of individuals tacitly contracting for mutual advantages. The meaning which constitutive communities give to individual life comes about precisely

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because individuals did *not* choose them; they are stuck with them.

On the other hand, communitarian rhetoric also applies to voluntary associations which do not generate the same totalizing experience for their members. Today, because there are so few constitutive communities, individuals try to turn voluntary associations into such communities. But this is usually doomed to failure; the chess club or the PTA cannot give coherence to the broad range of experience in the way that, for example, religion does.

Communitarianism is also invoked by intellectuals in a different way. Popular culture presently expresses a nostalgia for totalizing communities, while the middle class is busily creating private voluntary associations in the form of special interest groups. At bottom, people are trying to provide coherence to their lives. This popular sentiment is far more nostalgic than a real desire to take concrete steps to bring back constitutive communities; people do not really want them, because they entail coercion, limits and a lack of economic and social mobility.

Even as sentiment, however, the popular yearning differs significantly from what intellectuals often mean by communitarianism. Most intellectuals take communitarianism either as a call for a national culture to be interpreted and guarded by the intellectuals themselves, or else a call for voluntary associations. Intellectuals have not faced up to the fact that the fragile conditions underlying traditional communities have been irremediably shattered by modernity. In Guatemala I interviewed an Indian activist, hiding out from the Army, who spoke in ecstatic visionary terms about an indigenous culture purged of white influences — he fervently admired the Shining Path guerrillas — yet he also wanted transistor radios with which to disseminate purified traditional culture. In the US private voluntary associations are not what popular culture longs for; people are decrying a loss of meaning which comes from a sense of the bounded and bonded community, whereas private associations are principally tools of mobility, signifying life without limits.

Finally, communitarianism is invoked by politicians, along with family, localism and national culture: the usual package-deal which papers over all contradictions. What politicians offer is simply the provision of social services; sometimes generously, sometimes not, sometimes efficiently, sometimes not. But the promise of social services is not the promise of community. It is, instead, the promise of bureaucracy.

Taves: While it is important, in understanding this resurgence of attempts to reestablish community, to have the historical framework which Piccone provided, there is something uniquely and ironically modern about its current expression in America. Ironically modern, precisely because so much of communitarian sentiment entails a rejection of modernism on the part of popular culture. This rejection of modernism, not all of which is regressive, mostly centers on reclaiming a reliance on traditional values and all that entails with regard to the family, sexual relations, religion and the rejection of

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secularism, and the reinstitutionalization of "values" in the educational system from the elementary school level all the way up to the "Ethics" course in Harvard Law School.

In light of what Piccone said, this must be understood as, to some extent, a reflection of the failure of the New Deal. However, from the average person's viewpoint, this is seen less as a failure of government policy and more as a reaction against the sense of anonymity and powerlessness in the face of massive bureaucracies that have invaded almost all aspects of personal, social and institutional life. It is fine to be *an American* — the "unified" national identity which the New Deal only partially established — but even this sense of identity cannot be meaningfully sustained within statist and corporate bureaucracies (except perhaps in times of national crisis — like war). It must be integrated with and embedded in the particularity of local community and small scale institutional life like the VFW hall, the PTA, the churches and so on. Yet, as a consequence of all the factors contributing to the destruction of cohesive families and communities, people are in the paradoxical position of wishing for and demanding local autonomy while continuing to insist that legal, educational and government institutions take up the slack in everything from economic support to moral education. Demands for moral education, sex education, drug control and so on, things which the family and religion increasingly fail to provide, are being placed on a school system which is then criticized when, as expected, it cannot deliver. While the communitarian political rhetoric rages on, and we see evidence of an increasing resistance to social policy engineering on the part of the legal system — for example, in the current Yonkers housing discrimination case — citizens continue to support political-legal-bureaucratic control over personal behavior (anti-smoking legislation being the most recent obnoxious example). We find similar contradictions in the way in which people answer public opinion polls and respond to political appeals in matters of social policy. While, on the one hand, especially since the post-war generation, citizens have appealed to government on a large scale to solve social problems (and continue to do so), those same individuals will, in many cases, reject government intrusion in the solving of such problems in their personal lives or local community.

In this context, I want to return to Piccone's claim that Reaganism was a failure. Well, yes and no. Measured against Reagan's own claim — to rescind state intervention from people's personal and occupational lives — the answer is clearly yes, a miserable failure, in part due to the resiliency and intransigence of the New Class bureaucracy. On the other hand, on an ideological level, Reaganism is still quite successful. For instance, what I notice consistently in the public opinion polls about Reagan is that massive numbers of people will, even if not terribly well-informed (which is irrelevant here), clearheadedly disagree with Reagan's policies in case after case — from Central America to arms control — while turning right around and saying that he is doing a good job and is generally a first-rate president. It is in this important sense

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that Reaganism is not a failure. Reagan evinced a convincing ideological appeal for this retreat to traditionalism. This rejection of modernism came at a perfectly opportune time. And I think Bush will successfully ride Reagan's coat-tails on the rejection of modernism and secularism right into the White House.

As for what Siegel brought up — the explosion of "rights" issues — I want to connect it to something else he raised with regard to the fear of general social breakdown. In this context of the breakdown of norms of decency and safety in public life and without a means of appealing to a unified community for change or protection, it is not unreasonable for individuals to seek refuge in the legal and social protection of rights. That is, I feel coerced to accept your public and known private behavior no matter how offensive or morally objectionable I regard it, in order to protect my future right to a behavior or life-style potentially judged as obnoxious by others — a sort of mutual consent for normlessness. This has become the essence of the liberal social contract and is at least partly responsible for the dissolution of community ties which people now so nostalgically seek to reconstitute. However, this plunges people into a difficult contradiction. The tendency for excessive reliance on the institutionalization of rights, for example, through the courts, for the protection of individual civil liberties has, in many instances, turned against the interests of whole communities. An obvious example is the way people are reacting to the issue of giving priority to the individual civil liberties of AIDS victims over the community's right to protect itself from a potential health risk.

Anderson: The leviathan of rights, as currently understood, is a statist philosophy. It is ironic that these rights and liberties feed into a logic of domination which ultimately commits fundamental freedoms into the hands of a bureaucratic elite: judges, who decide on the basis of arguments formulated and presented by lawyers. At the same time, Taves is correct in observing that this process of appealing to rights is unavoidable for individuals stripped of the protections of community and delivered up, as a conglomeration of atomized individuals, to the hands of bureaucrats, who will determine their entitlements, within and without the state. I mean that *in fact*; there is nothing left to appeal to now except rights. There is no issue of any social importance for which the required response is not a lawsuit. Each individual has no choice but to take refuge in his rights, but in doing so the collective lock of state bureaucracy is tightened.

Piccone: The predicament is even worse than that. This unholy symbiosis of abstract individualism and managerial bureaucracies ultimately ends up manipulating the alleged protection of helpless isolated individuals into its own means of self-legitimation, without in the long run really doing much protecting — in fact, it is often counterproductive. A good example of this is the AIDS commission report. What was obviously a community problem immediately became redefined in terms of individual rights, the protection of which may endanger, or at least generate considerable anxiety within, the

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broader community. Widespread fears, warranted or not, of contamination or of unintended consequences unforeseeable because of inadequate knowledge about the nature of the epidemic, end up swept under the rug of individual rights to privacy, even at the cost of — at least in principle — potentially endangering large numbers of people. Ironically enough, these alleged efforts to protect the right of privacy of those carrying this dreadful disease is likely to have counterproductive consequences: to the extent that infected homosexuals and intravenous drug users need not reveal their condition, *every* homosexual and intravenous drug user now becomes suspect, thus triggering, on a much wider scale, precisely the kind of discriminatory backlash the commission's recommendations were meant to prevent. Far from being better protected as a result of bureaucratic assistance, homosexuals and intravenous drug users are now much worse off in terms of collective discrimination than would have been the case otherwise. Lastly, in terms of this logic of bureaucratic mediatizing, i. e., manipulating and organizing a constituency to advocate agendas developed from above, the pressure for that particular outcome of the AIDS commission report did not come from above, but from below, from the victims and high-risk groups themselves. On the other hand, it should also be added that the most successful efforts to contain AIDS so far have been those undertaken by various gay groups, independently of government bureaucracies, to educate and protect potential victims. Unfortunately, this solution is not generalizable, since what made it possible is the particular composition of these gay groups: higher-than-average levels of formal education, group cohesion, relatively high social awareness, etc.

Siegel: On the whole, gay rights groups are acting like any other interest group. For years they spoke of the rights of privacy. They waxed poetic about a zone of freedom beyond the heavy hand of the morally repressive state. They insisted that their prime objective was to get the government off their backs. Today, however, in the name of preventing the spread of AIDS to heterosexuals, something that is not happening, they want the keys to the treasury. Similarly, when manufacturers are fearful of government intervention, they speak of the necessity of respecting property rights and the inviolable laws of the free market. When, however, they need subventions, they invoke "the national interest."

Let me stop here to introduce something new. It seems to me the complicated pattern of things we are describing — the relation between rights and the state — has produced a new kind of individual: what we might call the dependent individualist. This type of dependent individualism shows up most clearly in the relation between individualism and social insurance in all its forms — not just with gays, but with all groups. Consider the claim of life style rights on the part of motocyclists who, defended by the likes of Larry Tribe, insist that they have the right to ride without a helmet. When these riders have accidents, cracking open their skulls, they receive the benefits of social/medical insurance.

What rankles is the tension generated by those who make largely hollow

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claims of autonomy, while at the same time reaping the benefits of social provisions. Rights in such a context are simply a mask for self-serving behavior. This is part of a larger phenomenon. Self-interest is nothing new. What *is* new is the contemporary tendency to wrap self-interest in the rhetoric of rights and entitlements owed to particular professional or status groups. Thus, the college biology teacher who loses interest in his subject and turns his class into a running account of his sex life, defends his actions in the name of academic freedom. The time-serving high school principal need not defend her laziness, she can speak instead of the need to protect professional public servants from political interference. The press similarly sails off in the singular pursuit of its own interests under the flag of the First Amendment, etc.

One final but important point. Piccone's comments on the New Deal do not make sense. We have had 25 years now of criticism of the New Deal. The renewed interest in community is not a response to the failure of the New Deal. It is a response to the failure of the response to the New Deal. In other words, nothing replaced the collapse of the New Deal synthesis. The concern for community today is an attempt to come to grips with the failure to create a post-New Deal idea of the common good. It is an attempt to fill the vacuum created by the collapse nearly 25 years ago of the idea of national community represented by the Great Society.

Piccone: For a professional historian, Siegel comes off as singularly a-historical. Worse yet, he seems to have bought into an idealized notion of suburbia, of communities and of the New Deal. Let us briefly examine them.

That suburbia is a community — or was meant to be one — is a peculiarly conformist notion. Suburban migration was triggered by the de-feudalization of ethnically segregated cities, and facilitated by the generalized use of automobiles and the construction of an extensive highway system. Its blossoming was coextensive with that very same process of collective homogenization of the American middle classes associated with the constitution of abstract interchangeable producers and manipulable alienated consumers. These people escaped cities which were finally becoming what the predominant ideology had advertised as "melting pots," and all the consequent social problems. Of course, deep-seated racism had a lot to do with it as well.

The main point *vis-à-vis* Siegel's unlikely myth of suburbia as a community, however, is that the eradication of what eventually became suburbanites from their ethnic urban abodes amounted to, for those who had not yet been fully integrated, Americanization by default, since the new heterogeneous suburban habitat necessitated the reduction of identities to what the media proposed as the standard. Unable to relate on any meaningful level but the most banal, consumerist ones, and devoid of traditions and customs, these abstract suburbanites could not *in principle* sustain any community life which, at any rate, could only be constituted from ground zero over a long period of time. A bunch of Dagwood Bumsteads sipping cheap beer, burning greasy hamburgers

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in fenced-in backyard fortresses and pondering the virtues of Chevys as compared to Fords does not quite qualify as a community. Mediated by the plastic images of Hollywood, their empty lives, and not the 1960s counterculture, is what had to be filled first by alcohol and sex, and then, in the short span of a generation, drugs. That these people's most significant contexts in times of crises remained a now rapidly disintegrating and geographically dispersed family network is an indication of the superficiality of suburban "communities." Today's twin phenomena of the yuppies and the underclass, of homelessness and generalized psychotherapy, are the result of this disintegration of social life successfully marketed as "progress."

What was *really* the New Deal remains to be clarified. Before WWI the US was a patchwork of subcommunities totalized by an hegemonic WASP rule which reduced these subcommunities to forced invisibility. In other words, whether one liked it or not, non-WASPs were *terminally* different, but that was seen actually as a *temporary* aberration to be eventually corrected through the unavoidable *Americanization* of subsequent generations. And this Americanization was essentially understood as a WASPification, i.e., assimilation without any visible residues which, at best, were to be successfully banished to the cultural subconscious. So the subcommunities that thrived in any large city were actually temporary waystations to eventual emancipation to quasi-WASPness — a task particularly difficult for non-whites who could learn English, change their names and become good Protestants, but found it a bit difficult to change color.

At any rate, the point is that, contrary to communitarian nostalgia, given the particular character of the US, American communities were always unavoidably historically contingent social residues in the process of being integrated by the irresistible logic of the given. Thus, although the New Deal was clearly precipitated by the Great Depression, something of the sort was unavoidable to complete the constitution of the US as a national entity — and, in fact, it is no accident that most of the innovations of the New Deal had already been pretty much successfully prefigured at the state level by Progressive legislation before WWI, and in the absence of major social crises.

What this means is that the issue is not one of communitarianism vs. liberalism (since, again recycling the Hegelian model, they are both already transcended stages of socio-historical development), but one of the nature of the post-New Deal state and its direction. The failure of Reaganism to return in any sense to an idealized *status quo ante* is only the latest confirmation of historical unidirectionality and the impossibility of turning the clock back. Hence, any discussion of communitarianism has to be understood, at least in the short run, in terms of *amending* the social system of which liberalism is only the political expression, by institutionalizing new types of community structures.

In this context, the New Deal must be seen as a *flawed totalization* in that, because of overriding economic considerations, it homogenized American society into passive consumers and producers by destroying its social fiber. The economic rescue operation worked, but it left the legacy of an unmanageable

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bureaucratic apparatus overseeing an increasingly dependent citizenry whose growing demands it cannot possibly meet, thus resulting in a permanent fiscal crisis. Citizens turned into narcissistic clients or abstract dependent individuals generate a corporative *bellum omnia contra omnes* whose results are a massive national debt, declining institutional efficiency, a growing permanent underclass, an unaccountable managerial elite, homelessness, family disintegration, and the rest of the all-too-familiar pathologies of contemporary American society.

Here Siegel is right: today's call for communitarianism is not a *post*-New Deal phenomenon, but one associated with the failure to provide a viable alternative to the New Deal model. One of the main reasons for this failure has to do with the fact that the bureaucratic penetration of everyday life by the New Deal managerial elite triggered, as a defense against it, a considerable concern with civil rights. Ironically enough, far from constituting a threat to the managerial elite, this explosion of rights ended up requiring further bureaucratic enforcement and regulation, thus *reinforcing* rather than challenging the new forms of New Class domination. Last, but not least, the literal enforcement of these otherwise valuable rights has had, as an unintented consequence, the further erosion of whatever community structures had managed to survive three decades of New Deal rationalization and, *ipso facto*, homogenization.

Anderson: The regime of rights did indeed emerge with, and as a reaction to, the New Deal. Siegel is correct in locating it as both an effect and a cause of this so-called "dependent individualism." New Deal institutions, over time, generated the client mentality of dependent individuals. That process was accelerated in the 1960s by the social programs of the Great Society and, as it turns out, by Viet Nam. In the wake of its failure in real warfare, the military became a defense industry and, as military Keynesianism, the nation's most expensive welfare program — a welfare program particularly acceptable to the middle class and corporate capital, which most benefited from it and, consequently, by conservatives.

One reason why the New Deal paved the way for dependent individualism is that it attempted, from above, to provide a *communitarian* solution to the depression. It sought to share the burdens on a national level — to invoke the idea of a national constitutive community. Such a fiction can be sustained for a short time, to meet some urgent and concrete threat such as war. But it cannot be sustained too long, because the rhetoric does not fit the reality. The nation is a *formal* entity which, as such, can never be a constitutive community, whose most distinguishing feature is precisely its precontractual, precategorical, "natural" (or, more correctly, "second natural") character. What became institutionalized of the New Deal were its bureaucracies, while its *spirit* — the spirit of community feeling and self-sacrifice — could not be sustained. The spirit faltered, but the bureaucracies remained, and gradually engendered today's dependent individuals.

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The result was the acceleration of the breakdown of whatever constitutive communities had not already fallen victim of capitalist rationalization. The logic of welfare bureaucracies is that they, and not intermediate communities which are dismissed as inadequate, must minister to the needs of the people. The reality, of course, is that these bureaucratic remedies turn out to be even more inadequate, but they still manage to undercut communities as informal purveyors of social services. In the end, nobody ends up with much of anything, except fights with the Welfare Department over lost checks, or with the Social Security Administration over eligibility. Then it is time to bring in the lawyers.

In the end, there are only lonely individuals clutching their rights like shields in the face of attacks by both the state and capitalism. The logic of domination has gradually cut them off from everyone else, while this alienation puts on a happy face by calling it the triumph of individual rights. In fact, however, it looks more like the triumph of the state. Having said as much, the question we must ask is: what are the alternatives? Give up rights? Would anyone really care to give up their rights? And now let me ask a tougher question: even back in those mythical days when there *were* constitutive communities and intermediating institutions, would anyone have wanted to give up whatever rights they had even then?

Siegel: I do not think this dependent individualism is engendered by the New Deal philosophy *per se*. It is made possible by it. The New Deal state is its precondition, but it did not engender it. America never became Sweden, let alone the Soviet Union. We have to remember that FDR was the president who not only created the New Deal state, he also built the Jefferson memorial. FDR made it a point again and again to say that he was not attempting to transform American values, but merely to realize them in new forms.

The creation of the current bureaucratic state is a product of both the New Deal and the statist consequences of the Brown decision. The Brown decision paved the way for new varieties of government activism. And here it is important to remember that Earl Warren, the man who melded the protection of individual rights to an activist state, was not a New Dealer. He was an old fashioned progressive who had rejected much of the New Deal as governor of California.

Anderson: I think Siegel has introduced the other key element which follows the New Deal in initiating the regime of rights, and that, of course, is the civil rights movement and the blacks' struggle for equality. But the philosophy of rights as envisioned by the civil rights movement is fundamentally different from the public philosophy of rights found today, for example, in many of the most notorious cases fought by the American Civil Liberties Union. The difference hinges on the question of *social knowledge* and *moral facts* and in this respect it raises the question of how contemporary rights-oriented liberals have abandoned a commitment to the Enlightenment.

After all, the struggle for civil rights was founded on Enlightenment ideals.

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Whether mere ideology or not, it was seen as a knowable *fact*, accessible to reason, that discrimination based on mere race was wrong. The ideal of tolerance also embodied in the Enlightenment tradition was rooted in the *limits* of knowledge and reason — the view that there were some areas in which people could reasonably disagree, especially in matters of religion. It was a philosophy which championed reason and knowledge and, most importantly, tolerance.

The current philosophy of rights is predicated on a pure legal proceduralism rooted in the idea that we cannot know any moral facts and that all claims about "the good" are relative. It is peculiar that the rhetoric of natural law rights has come to be flaunted on behalf of moral relativism, but it has happened. Thus the current ACLU stance on drug pushers congregating in the streets to make drug sales is that we *cannot know* what we all *do* know — i.e., that these guys are drug pushers. Instead, we have to pretend that they are merely people on the street, constituting a little group, which is, presumably, as morally defensible as other groups such as the poor, whose fragile, fragmentary communities they are systematically destroying with crack.

In this example, what the ACLU refuses to recognize is a behavioral fact about known drug-pushers, and not a moral fact. But the point remains the same: this use of rights for moral relativism takes tolerance as the starting point and champions ignorance, rather than starting with knowledge and working its way to tolerance. The differences are extraordinary. We would not have had any kind of civil rights successes for blacks or anyone else based on mere tolerance, as a free-floating expression of moral relativism. Civil rights took hold only because we accepted moral facts and were willing to declare certain behaviors, even behaviors about a whole society, wrong. Mere tolerance, of the kind which arose later in the 60s, does not get you that far. It produces passivity.

And my final point here is that perhaps we should not say that *any* philosophy of rights necessarily entails dependent individualism and the bureaucratic state. It may be a problem mainly for versions of the philosophy of rights which takes relativism and ignorance as their starting point, thinking, mistakenly, that only blindness can engender tolerance. At any rate, I am not inclined to write off liberalism so fast, in part because I think we have not confronted the misery of living in constitutive communities *without* liberal rights.

Siegel: Anderson is right. There has been a shift in liberal philosophy. It is no longer altogether honest. Consider the liberal reaction to ministerial politics. When churchly politics is represented by the Reverend Jackson, it is good; when it is represented by the Reverend Falwell, it is bad. Today's liberals are so unwilling to criticize Jackson that when, speaking on national TV during the Republican convention, he proclaimed that Hitler had been America's ally, it produced no comment from either his network interlocuters or the press.

But to go back to your broader point about differing philosophies of rights, this Rousseauian vision you are talking about, where we either have the general will as embodied in the ACLU, or discrete individuals attached directly to

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the state, it is not the New Deal vision. This vision comes out of the civil rights movement and the anti-war movement, where liberalism, for a long period of time, defined itself in opposition to American society. Society became the enemy and the way to reform the country was to transform not economic relations but all social relations from above in the name of individual rights for those below. This helps produce the odd, often quasi-anarchist conjunction of left-wing social libertarianism and right-wing economic libertarianism. In effect, traditional communities are whipsawed from the Left by the radical individualism of the cultural libertarians, and on the Right by the ideologues of the free market. One of the ironies of Reaganism is the way its free market economics have helped undercut the idealized Midwestern small towns, which are now leaning toward the Democrats, even as big city ethnics move toward the Republicans.

This kind of liberalism, based on moral relativism and dependent individualism, is not New Deal liberalism. It represents a major shift. In America there has always been an intermediate form of community. There have been quasi-voluntary communities of affinity. Given the choice, many Americans chose to think of themselves in terms not only of individual but community identities. What has undercut this has been the spread of the market into every sphere of life. One manifestation of that spread was the growth of humanist psychology.

Consider the impact of Carl Rogers' "Person of Tomorrow," once a prototype but now, in the wake of the "Me Decade," a familiar enough sort on the American social scene. Let me paraphrase Rogers: The person of tomorrow would reject all orthodoxies available, including marriage, to turn themselves on by whatever means available. The "Person of Tomorrow" rejects the objective pursuit of truth — this long before Lacan, Derrida, *et al* triumphed in the academy. Long before the French conquest, you had the triumph in America of an extreme form of subjectivist individualism. We can see a fascinating conjuncture of humanist psychology, the French invasion, and capitalist ideology in the person of Werner Erhard, of EST fame. Erhard gives corporate seminars on the need for subjectivism, the need to be and do what you want, regardless of the context or the consequences for others. About whom does Erhard preach, who does he give his corporate students to read? He gives them Derrida.

Piccone: Before launching another tirade to demonstrate how French poststructuralism or German idealism are sapping the last vestiges of intelligence in Western civilization, we should very briefly go back to a distinction Anderson smuggled in unchallenged, and Siegel seemingly endorsed, between natural rights and post-Brown decision civil rights. It is not immediately clear to me that, especially in view of the rapid rate with which the Supreme Court reinterprets everything but the kitchen sink, that it makes any philosophical sense to talk about "natural" rights as such, or about natural rights as the constitutional backbone of pre-Brown decision American law.

Civil rights are always irreducibly historical and, to hypostatize them to a natural level, inevitably involves reification or, very often, theological fraud (in

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that it implicitly assumes an arbitrary divinity endowing mortals with any otherwise historically-constituted rights they claim to possess). At any rate, the Supreme Court assumption of the historicity of whatever rights it sees itself entrusted with defining and redefining makes the issue moot: such redefinitions necessarily trivialize into meaninglessness any "natural," i.e., ontologically invariant, character these rights might have had.

There are even stronger doubts concerning the watershed nature of the Brown decision in redefining the very nature of civil rights as such. Having registered this objection, maybe we should drop this particular issue. I do not think it would be wise, in the present discussion, to wade into those legal swamps which are likely to take us far from what we should be disscusing: the resurgence of communitarianism today and the various problems associated with it.

Anderson: I think you have misunderstood where I locate this shift in liberalism. It is not in the Brown decision or in the civil rights movement in the 1960s. The collapse of liberalism into moral relativism and the promotion of tolerance on the basis of "nobody can know anything anyway" occurred later, in the breakdown of Great Society attempts to fix the New Deal and win in Vietnam. Let me try to return to something more relevant that was mentioned earlier, but not sufficiently developed. One of the most distressing features of the current discussion of community is that intellectuals, politicians, and popular culture are all talking at cross purposes. Intellectuals seem to champion a national culture, which they will administer. Politicians want to create new social services in the name of supporting community and families; whatever virtues such programs may have in supporting middle-class social and economic mobility, they have little to do with communities. Popular culture waxes nostalgic for forms of constitutive community which it can hardly recall and certainly would not endorse if it had to confront the social sacrifices necessary to sustain them — principally, the loss of mobility and personal freedom. Even so, everyone talks about community, because the rate of social disintegration is astonishing, and nowhere is that more evident than in the puny little institutions we try to put in their place. Instead of constitutive communities, for example, we have AT&T urging us all to call home on Sundays at the cheap rate. The question, then, is whether constitutive communities really are gone for good. Piccone has spoken convincingly on how the social conditions underlying traditional culture are easily destroyed by modernity, by technology, by mobility. But now there are two possibilities: constitutive communities struggling to survive in a modern disintegrated culture, and the creation of new constitutive communities.

As to the latter, new communities, well, it is not quite like joining a tennis club. Constitutive communities are not turned on and off, like a light switch. Thinking that one can is to confuse them with voluntary associations, which have their role, but do not replace meaning-giving constitutive community. Yet even this "functional" way of speaking of constitutive communities misses the point. We can talk about all the social and psychological perks of constitutive

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communities, just as we can talk about their costs and burdens. Looking at such communities from the outside, we evaluate them in terms of those costs and benefits. But that is *not* how they come about, nor is it how, generally, such communities are maintained. The psychological costs and benefits are collateral to the fact that, for example, the community exists to love and serve God, or some other transcendental end. Constitutive communities are not justified by a social contract setting out the perks; in that sense, they are anti-liberal.

As to constitutive communities struggling to survive, well, there is always the Amish. Obviously, however, if *that* is what is left of constitutive communities, and there is no possibility of re-creation, then we had better hope the bureaucracy does a good job of providing services, and we had better clutch our rights as shields ever more firmly, because we are all alone. An example more interesting than the Amish would be the Mormons, who have sought to maintain a constitutive community, devoted to God, in the suburbs. It is no accident that Mormons oppose bureaucratic state welfarism; they see it as undermining their communities. The Mormons' political strategy, beginning with opposition to the ERA, has been the virulent rejection of any policy — sex education, AIDS education, child care — which undermines the Mormon religious message.

Taves: While they may be longing for it psychologically, individuals are not primarily seeking to reconstruct traditional communities. They are seeking to reconstruct a *sense* of community, which will protect what are often nothing more than special interest group rights, under the rhetoric of a rights agenda, developed via a form of social cohesion based on relatively narrow common interests. That is different from an organic community, and Piccone is correct in trying to force us to be clearheaded and precise about what exactly we mean when discussing communitarianism. It is interesting that, as a political phenomenon, people seem to be assuming that somehow, mysteriously, by recreating "community" discursively — by merely *talking* about it — the organicity of it will somehow follow. Nonsense. The organic character of community comes out of birth and legacy, family relations, common religion and geography, and the lack of mobility and choice — all of which modern America has long since rejected. It has rejected it whether in the form of localism or national identity. In this regard I do not understand what Piccone is trying to say about *the State* in America. You cannot really talk about *the State* with a capital "S" to an American. Americans do not really believe there is such an entity. There is the welfare bureaucracy, there is the IRS, and so on, but these are not thought of as part of a totalizing sphere of an omnipresent state.

Piccone: This is why mentioning Nazism, Stalinism, fascism or communism in the European sense when discussing the US does not make much sense. Historically they were all statist solutions fundamentally foreign to the American experience — an experience all about autonomy, concreteness, particularity,

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and individuality. The state was always seen as an extraneous entity superimposed by necessity and under exceptional crisis conditions on an otherwise healthy social body. And this was my original point about the New Deal as a flawed totalization which sought to generalize and formalize (and thus reconstitute on a higher level) all these rapidly disintegrating subcommunities into a kind of national super-community by means of centralized coordination and planning. In order to do so, however, it had to homogenize and organically integrate these subcommunities, thus unavoidably destroying their specificity. Thus, it ended up homogenizing not only all conflicting particularities defining these various subcommunities, but individuality itself as an autonomous locus of norms. This resulted in what Hegel called "external mediation," which split society into an homogenizing and regulating managerial elite and a regulated and homogenized mass.

What were initially purely procedural measures unavoidably became substantive norms, since procedures are always parasitic on enthymimetic values which only rarely are consciously examined and subjected to critical scrutiny. This generated the phenomenon Siegel has aptly described as "dependent individualism" — people unable to function independently of a paternalistic bureaucratic apparatus which they simultaneously despise.

And, as I mentioned earlier, this was one of the main reasons why the conservative strategy in the 1980s failed: when the state tried to pull back and allow civil society to resume its self-regulating role, it found not a viable civil society of autonomous individuals but only institutional ruins addicted to state support and a dependent individualism incapable of taking charge of anything. This is also why present communitarian demands can, at best, only hope to streamline that liberalism they claim to challenge. The reconstituted communities that have been resurfacing during at least the last 15 years, based on artificial and pre-homogenized ethnic particularities, gender or sex-preference specificity, and the myriad of other socio-politically dubious distinctions are an indication of the illusory communitarian outcome that, at worst, can result from present discussions on the subject. It ends up perpetuating precisely the kind of moribund post-New Deal compromise predicated on moral relativism that combines libertarian rhetoric and statist practices.

Siegel: What you said about Reaganism is not true in economic matters: it may be true in the social sphere, but not in the economic.

Piccone: In economics the conservative thrust has been to encourage profitability and investments — exactly what any Democratic or liberal administration would also have had to do in order to reverse the high inflation and unemployment rates of the late 1970s. Actually, the prefiguration of a new post-New Deal social model is to be found in the Nixon years, when a serious attempt was made to restructure the international division of labor by emphasizing hi-tech investments by oligopolistic capitalist interests in the US

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and indirectly encouraging the flight of traditional competitive, and therefore not too profitable, industries abroad (thus monopolizing highly profitable productive activities to uphold American high standards of living *vis-à-vis* the rest of the world). Compounded with a shrewd strategy to re-establish international hegemony, no longer by means of the Marines but by financial manipulation of petrodollar transactions with underdeveloped countries and Eastern Europe, what eventually became the Reagan revolution was checkmated by Watergate — a successful counteroffensive of traditional competitive capitalist interests in the Democratic Party to stop the implementation of the new strategy and, *ipso facto*, their economic ruin.

In a sense, Reagan tried to pick up where Nixon left off, but it was too late . . .

Siegel: Absolutely not. In his first term Nixon governed domestically as a moderate New Dealer. To listen to you, one would think Reagan came to power and moved on issues like abortion and school prayer. He never moved on the right-wing social issues, which is part of the reason conservatives are now so dispirited.

Piccone: But the rhetoric was there.

Siegel: But that is all that was there. If Reagan wanted to eliminate racial quotas, all he had to do was issue an executive order. It is something he never did. What Reagan did was harness the social conservatives to his economic program.

Piccone: Wait. The reason why Reagan has been unable to implement any parts of his social programs, despite enormous pressure from the New Right, has to do with the simple fact discussed in detail in my article on "The Crisis of Conservatism," i.e., that Reagan's conservative coalition was predicated on the administrative expertise of the neoconservatives (burned-out 1960s liberals) who were dead against anything of the sort.

But enough of this historical detour. Let us get back to the question of communitarianism today.

Siegel: The most dramatic political event of the last few years was the Bork hearings. What was the claim asserted above all others at those hearings? The right to privacy. The emphasis was not on privacy as one desideratum among other competing rights, but on the *primacy* of privacy. Moreover, the broad popularity enjoyed by this absolutist defense of privacy points to the fundamentally anti-communitarian nature of American life today, even if concerns about the loss of social cohesion continue to grow. This goes back to what Taves said about the contradictory nature of public sentiment on these issues.

Despite concern about the loss of community, the process of fragmentation in American cultural life is by now so far advanced that communitarianism can thrive in few places other than the Harvard political science faculty. The

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longing for community coexists with a fear of community.

The communitarian/libertarian split appears both on the Left and the Right. Bob Kuttner, who is a social democrat, has more in common on the issue of community with a right-winger like Paul Weyrich than most of his fellow leftists. Both start with a strong set of ethical assumptions; egalitarian in one case, familial in the other; both are powerful critics of a market-morality. While Weyrich is a powerful critic of libertarian economic tendencies on the Right, Kuttner has forcefully analyzed the pernicious consequences of Hollywood life-style liberalism for the Democrats.

Piccone: All that shows is that the communitarian/liberalism debate is not reducible to one that readily falls into a Left/Right split, but cuts across traditional political categories. In fact, it signifies the obsolescence of those traditional categories in a situation in which the most important political divisions today are between the New Class managerial elite and an incoherent populist mass incapable of coalescing around any viable political program. In such a context, it is not immediately obvious that the communitarian side is always inescapably doomed to fail.

Siegel: But it *is*, and let me show you why. The outcome of the split is that the Left libertarians win on cultural issues and free market libertartians win on economic issues, so that the communitarians of both parties lose. The net effect is to move the country in a quasi-libertarian direction. I say "quasi" because increasingly what holds people together, in an age of dependent individualism, is not the bureaucratic state *per se* but the various forms of social and economic insurance. Rather than serving as a mechanism for common goals, the state is a manager of risk distribution mechanisms. Insurance allows us to be alone together. It allows individuals to pursue their individual aims without the encumbrances of heavy family involvement or the threat of heavily intrusive state intervention.

Piccone: This sounds like typical bureaucratic management of redistribution mechanisms to regulate a society of dependent individuals unwilling and unable to take responsibility for matters affecting their life.

Siegel: Yes and no. There are important differences. If I look at the average guy, he has theft insurance, homeowner's insurance, auto insurance, life insurance, health insurance, social security (which is a kind of insurance), unemployment insurance. The welfare state is no longer undergirded by the ideal of solidarity, which has been displaced by the insurance techniques used to shift and minimize risk. Insurance need not involve moral judgement. It treads lightly on individuals. It says I can follow the life-style I choose while enjoying the security that once came only from membership in a large well-to-do family or a cohesive group.

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Anderson: What is so terrible about social life organized around insurance principles? I thought the whole point is that the state treads lightly so that individuals can, if it is still possible, create some modern equivalent of constitutive communities. Otherwise, it becomes a matter of creating a national community, which I find to be a misguided and contradictory effort, the result of which is bureaucracy. I rather favor the insurance system because it leaves open the possibility that constitutive communities could continue. Let me add, too, that I am not at all sure that the libertarians on both extremes have won. It seems to me that communitarians have made permanent advances. All the discussion in Atlanta, at the Democratic National Convention, about family, community, shared obligations — it is a victory for communitarians.

Siegel: Be specific.

Anderson: Well, feminism in particular. Feminist theory is virtually a paean to community and connectedness, and a rejection of individualism and freedom as masculine vices which lead to loneliness. The essential communitarian appeal, I think, is the desire to give up loneliness.

Siegel: Are women a community?

Anderson: Look, I understand that this communitarian stuff *is* mostly rhetoric. I also understand that the chances of this rhetoric actually reviving community are nil. I even understand that, when push comes to shove, most people are not so enamored of community as they are of mobility — and of no group is that more true than feminists, for whom communitarianism is so often no more than careerism, especially among feminist academics, for whom rhetoric about communitarianism is almost *automatically* careerist. But the presence of such rhetoric, even if it will not lead where it claims, is something to be explained.

Siegel: Mainstream feminism is deeply individualistic. The black community is the exception which proves the rule in this case.

Anderson: What community is more important to the Democratic Party?

Siegel: It is not important as a community; it is, however, important as a vast black vote.

Anderson: Even so, no rhetoric is more important to the Democratic Party today than communitarianism . . .

Siegel: Only in one area: the platform policy on plant closing legislation.

Anderson: What about all the discussion of family and child care?

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Siegel: No, be careful with that. The support for family and child care legislation has two purposes. It is designed to allow people to continue to pursue their upward mobility unimpeded. It is not directed at aiding communities. Secondly, legislation like the ABC day care bill will create a huge number of public sector jobs for licensed professionals. It is a beautiful piece of legislation for the Democrats, because it allows them to serve their interests groups while allegedly filling a widespread public need.

Piccone: What this translates into, then, is nothing but more bureaucratic administration and statist intervention into everyday life.

Siegel: It is transparently an electoral rhetoric. It does not inform the party's broader policies. What we are describing in terms of interest group politics is the way in which, in an insurance-based state, every group tries to shift the burden of costs.

Anderson: Again, I do not see why the insurance principle is a bad thing, given that the attempt to create a national community is contradictory, destructive of constitutive community and productive of bureaucracy.

Siegel: The problem is that a social insurance state bereft of the sentiments of social solidarity degenerates into a "beggar thy neighbor" spirit and politics.

Anderson: My point is, however, that it is one thing to criticize the liberal insurance principle as a general flaw of liberalism: it is something else to criticize it in the present context. I accept the latter, but not necessarily the former.

Piccone: Where does this leave us in terms of the possibilities of communitarianism beyond rhetorical flourishes by relatively irrelevant wings in both parties?

Siegel: Up the creek without a paddle. . .

Taves: Well, not necessarily. We are left with two possibilities, both of which entail that traditional communities are not going to be recreated out of political rhetoric. One option is to call voluntary associations communities, which would be a mistake. The more realistic development is to expect the rhetoric to begin to have an influence on accelerating the normal and usually minimal process of developing a spontaneous sense of organic community around common problems. People live in a neighborhood and hardly know each other until they confront a common garbage service (or similar) problem. Now, for several years polling agencies have reported that the overwhelming local concern of most Americans is crime or, conversely, public safety. We can reasonably expect the political rhetoric of communitarianism and local control to have increasing ramifications in local politics all over the country in a growing willingness on the

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part of semi-spontaneous, re-created organic communities to protect their geographical boundaries by resisting bureaucratic intrusions which disrupt their life-style or threaten their safety. The by-now famous Yonkers housing discrimination case is a prime example. Did the government prove its case that housing policy in Yonkers involved systematic racial discrimination? Clearly, yes. However, this federal intrusion to protect the civil rights of blacks has not only increased (at least in the short term) community resistence to integration, but has also clearly failed to address the fears of the white community based on the equation of: concentrated black housing+poverty= increase in crime. The political rhetoric of communitarianism will continue to have the effect of increasing this kind of local resistance to federal intrusion. The rhetoric of communitarianism will certainly support and probably accelerate the already widespread developing resentment of, and resistance to, bureaucratic social engineering.

Anderson: A good example of this growing resistance can be seen in what *Newsweek* has called the "NIMBY" phenomenon. NIMBY, of course, stands for "not-in-my-backyard." The article talked about "community" concerns, sliding freely between the need for the national community to share and impose burdens and the concern of local communities to survive by rejecting those burdens; the two were the same argument on different scales.

Siegel: One manifestation of Nimbyism, which is also a response to the due process revolution, is the rapid growth of private covenanted housing developments which have some of the aspects of community, if only because they are largely self-contained. The growth of these private, largely exurban housing developments — there are now an estimated 20 million people who live in them — is one of the most significant developments of the past 15 years. The housing developments have insulated themselves from not only the underclass, but from the more general requirements of the Fourteenth Amendment as well. Many have private schools, private garbage collection, private security services, as well as, of course, private roads. This is a population which has bought insulation from, say, the problems of a Yonkers. In effect, these are private governments which have, for many purposes, seceded from the larger society.

Anderson: Of course, if social disintegration goes far enough, then a new movement will likely arise to force open these communities. And the move to force them open will be made on the same due process grounds.

Siegel: It would be hard, because they can hide behind the claims of private property.

Anderson: Yes, exactly. Which is to say that these people have bought their way out of the system of public entitlements and bureaucracy. Capital can do it,

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for now. Down the road, however, there will be a move to try and drop them back in again. The argument will not be *simply* that burdens can be imposed upon them; it will be that their very regime of private property depends on the enforcement of rights by state bureaucracies. Since they depend on the state for their property rights, the state can impose burdens on them. Obviously it is an old argument. But the lesson, from the viewpoint of the state, is that in the long run no one can escape dependent individualism, not even with capital.

Of course, these buy-your-way-out private enclaves are *not* constitutive communities. They are high-priced countercultures. They are private associations — an extension of associations formed to make sure garbage is collected. They are formed purely by internal contract. This is a problem insofar as people believe that they are getting a true community. They are not.

Taves: Let me cut in here on that particular issue. I came across an article a couple of weeks ago in the *New York Times* on this very matter. It is fascinating the lengths that Americans will go to create these voluntary associations centered around some kind of problematic issue. The article cites the tremendous rise in the number of self-help groups and similar associations in the last few years, and some of them are rather remarkable. For instance, there is a group called "NO SAD," for those with "Seasonal Affective Disorders." This is for those who screw up relationships or suffer the sadness of loneliness at certain predictable times of the year. Then, there is POND, for "Parents of Near Drowners." How about this one: "Fundamentalists Anonymous." It has 50 chapters and 50,000 members and is geared toward "the fundamentalist experience — an addiction," as analogous to Alcoholics Anonymous. There are Loners On Wheels (for single recreational vehicle owners), the Feminist Karate Union — this should provide a good source of feminine company for men with masochistic tendencies — and the American Mall Walkers Club, among many others. I like this one: "Kleptomaniacs Anonymous." Unfortunately, this group proved to be a disappointment for the founder, because she found that the members were robbing her blind at the meetings. My absolute favorite, however, did not appear in the article, but was told to me by a friend whose girlfriend seriously recommended that he join a group called "Sexaholics Anonymous" — for those afflicted with an *addiction* to sexual gratification. . .

Siegel: What would be the cure: to kick the habit?

Anderson: But there is a problem with all these associations — the problem which makes so many individuals in them literally pathetic. Special interest clubs, whether the chess club or the karate club, serve special interests. Many of the individuals who join are seeking, however, a totalizing community — seeking, in effect, religion and family. And generally these groups cannot provide for those needs, for obvious reasons. An individual will not be able to compensate by joining *many different* organizations, insofar as what is sought is

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something totalizing. I think it is one of the great disasters of modern life: people try to re-create the effect of a total community by joining a lot of splintered groups and wind up feeling more fragmented than ever.

Siegel: What is interesting about what Taves and Anderson have just said is that there no longer seems to be any way to express political attitudes outside of the rhetoric of rights-based individualism. What Taves has described is the emphasis on individual experiences. They are not reaching to something outside themselves to be part of these organizations. They are associating with people who had the same subjective experiences.

Taves: OK, let us try to recenter the discussion. I suggest a sort of two-pronged question: "What might a communitarian program look like concretely today?" or, alternatively, "What are some of the possibilities for fitting existing projects under the rubric of communitarianism" and, "What does communitarianism have to do with radical politics?"

Piccone: In terms of positive possibilities of reconstructing communities — and here I am referring to modern versions of communities understood in the strong sense of traditional, identity-constituting social organizations — the prospects may not be all that bleak. In fact, in the next 10 to 20 years we will probably see the resurgence of a myriad of semi-traditional micro-communities centered around family and neighborhoods functioning autonomously within a socio-political system intent more on coordinating their interaction rather than regulating them or actually penetrating them benignly through financial support and other irresistible lures that destroy them faster than any otherwise hostile act. This sort of modest minimal program is not only possible, but also highly desirable. And this, I suspect, is all we can hope for: the reconstitutions of micro-communities which will eventually engender the kind of autonomous individuality able not only to sustain liberal institutions from below, but also to qualitatively change them.

Anderson: How is that possible, given what you said earlier regarding mobility, unless people are prevented from moving every five years?

Piccone: Well, this sort of thing may have to stop. People must realize that, although moving may solve some problems, it also tends to create many more. I am told by my friend Zaslavsky — the source of all my wisdom concerning anything East of the Elbe river — that there is a Russian (or maybe Mongolian) proverb to the effect that moving twice is equivalent to a major fire which destroys everything one owns. Relocating is extremely disruptive, not only for the individuals moving, but also for what they leave behind. Geographical mobility carries a high price tag. . .

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Siegel: Fine, but atomized individualism is market-based. If we look at the economy we see that everything is personalized. Part of the breakdown of the New Deal coalition was the breakdown of mass markets. Reich (the second, Charles) wanted pure peanut butter: pure products for pure people. That process has spread much further. Jeans once represented communality. We were all workers together in the 60s. Now we have designer jeans. Jeans were turned into a symbol of status differentiation. Only amongst professional sociologists did the theory of the mass market and mass society survive into the 1980s. The advertising and marketing industries recognized long before then that mass society had fragmented into discrete and specialized markets. You also have the triumph of subjectivism in everything from education to art. Subjectivism makes communality — forget community! — all the more difficult. Given this, the only kind of associations you can have are those that Taves talked about, mall-walkers, etc. Nothing that I see is going to displace this triumph of subjectivism.

Piccone: Wait a minute. You are mistaking *mass* product differentiation not only with the obsolescence of mass markets, but with the *refutation* of the theory of mass society. Market fragmentation does not mean that the logic of mass society is suddenly obsolete, but only that technological advancements and better responsiveness to what is perceived as public demand have made mass society more refined. Nothing has substantially changed with the introduction of New Coke, Classic Coke, Cherry Coke, No-caffeine Coke, Diet Coke, Diet no-caffeine Coke, Cherry Diet Coke, No-caffeine Diet Cherry Coke, etc. Everyone of them is still "it" in terms of their social meaning and consequences. Instead of a mass market, what we now have is a *fragmented* mass market. Everything else stays the same. The alienative logic of consumerism, advertising, consciousness-manipulation, profitability, etc. all remain more efficient and pervasive than ever before.

The point of radical critiques of mass society, i.e., that such a society is fundamentally unstable and that it creates the conditions for its own eventual demise, remains. Growing social disintegration is simply further evidence of that. Atomized or dependent individualism has become the norm, but what that means is that the stability of the social order within which these phenomena take place is increasingly threatened. This is why communitarianism is becoming increasingly an issue. The real question is: are communitarian remedies sufficiently strong medicine to cure what radical critics have indicted as the terminal disease of advanced industrial societies?

You are right in claiming that atomized individualism is now more market based than ever before. All this means is that its disruptive effects are even more destructive then ever, which provides at least a partial answer to what we began discussing, i.e., why there has been a resurgence of interest in communitarianism recently.

As for the identification of atomized individualism with subjectivism, this is

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a linguistic problem. By subjectivism, Siegel means something different from what many people, including myself, ordinarily mean by it. For Siegel it does not mean autonomous individuality able to sustain democratic institutions or to make deliberate choices based on clear value commitments, but arbitrariness, relativism, etc. This latter kind of "subjectivism" that Siegel is rightly complaining about (and here he is close to the Horkheimer of *The Eclipse of Reason*) began with the positivists and has now been going on for quite a while, well after the falling out of fashion of positivism, with the coming of postmodernism and the philosophical sanctification of relativists such as Wittgenstein, Foucault, etc.

Taves: I agree: this fragmentation of markets, etc. is a pseudo-fragmentation and a pseudo-individuality. These so-called individual markets and subjective choices are tied together by what Siegel himself has already labeled "dependant individualism." The fact that you wear X designer jeans and I wear another makes no difference whatsoever. It is a superficial distinction.

Siegel: It is and it is not. For many of my students, which designer jeans and which sneakers they wear is terribly important.

Taves: The fact that it is psychologically important is irrelevant here. It is still a tie into a market-based sense of individualism, and the fragmentation of the market to generate a new type of pseudo-individuality does not eliminate dependence on a still *real* mass society (as opposed to a sociological fiction).

Siegel: I'm not arguing that this creates an *authentic* individual. Obviously, we have a paradox. We have mass advertised products which are personalized.

Taves: I do not think this is a real paradox. This substantiation of an atomized personal identity within a fragmented mass market is no more than the corporate continuation of attempting to forge and appeal to a sense of common identity as "liberated" individualist consumers first established, to return to our discussion of much earlier, in the era of the New Deal. We remain within the framework of what most characterized the transformative quality of that era, namely the transcendence of traditional community constraints on identity and mobility in favor of a new national norm of "mass liberalism" in economic *and* cultural spheres. This new liberalism was no doubt appealing to people's wishes to escape those aspects of community life which they found to be oppressive, traditional, ethnic and limiting. Some of us originally came out of such communities and left out of personal choice, with no intention of returning. In this sense, we cannot pose the question in terms of a mere choice between the *status quo* of atomized (fragmented) market individualism versus a return to restrictive traditional communities. Any politically viable new communitarianism will require a much broader latitude in matters of personal

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choice than traditional communities allowed, while at the same time providing the benefits of stability, safety and a known personal identity within the context of concrete sociality. There is no possibility of a simple wholesale return to traditional, restrictive community life.

Piccone: Of course not: but that is not what I meant. It is not a matter of returning to that sort of restrictive structure. It is neither possible nor desirable. What I meant is something much more simple and pedestrian. They would be *new* organizations because they would be based on contemporary experiences, needs, socio-economic structures, etc. But to the extent that they would still be anchored in kinship ties, friendship, neighborhoods, etc., they would retain many of the features of traditional communities and, at any rate, be immensely stronger than mere run-of-the-mill voluntary associations.

These new subcommunities, however, require a different kind of citizenry, considerably different from Siegel's "dependent individuality," Lasch's narcissistic personality, etc. In this sense, the problem has to be seen in terms of strategies conducive to the constitution of a new individuality —an old Marxist project assumed to be automatically solved by merely changing economic relations — by no means identical to the traditional autonomous individual the Frankfurt School saw as generated by the bourgeois family, but close to it. Without subjects able to sustain new institutional forms, all talk of communities is inevitably vacuous and, at best, gradually deteriorates to programs imposing from above counterproductive coercive measures to force the constitution of this individuality. (In a way, this is what the New Right generally proposes).

The original question had nothing to do with predictions concerning what will happen. Rather, it inquired into objective possibilities for reconstituting the functional equivalent of traditional communities without the restrictions that went along with them, that is, modern sub-communities able to provide the psychological and material support everyone would like without, however, paying the price they demand. It would entail a break with the New Deal consumer logic of social integration by means of greatly expanded centralized redistributive mechanisms. Are there any counter tendencies in this direction? . . .

Anderson: You are supposed to find a nice girl, settle down, have a couple of kids and call your mom once a week.

Piccone: Exactly what Siegel has done. . .

Taves: And most of us, with the exception of Siegel, should probably leave New York within the week if that is the case. Our families are not here. We are not here on the basis of organic ties. We are here largely on the basis of purely professional ties. Friendship is almost a consequence.

There will undoubtedly be some trend in this direction of attempts to recreate community. Much of it, it seems to me, will be based on a confluence

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of factors that are independent of state intervention and which are generating support for strenghthening family structure as a means to stave off the intrusion of social decay and positively return some modicum of meaning to personal lives. Thankfully, the narcissistic, anti-authority, drug-crazed faction of the New Left is largely discredited, and resistance to large-scale bureaucratic social engineering is definitely on the rise among the broader citizenry. A baby boom is on among those who, both forced by the demands of the biological clock and disaffected from their atomized past, are now seeking socially-structured, safe environments in which to raise their families. Large cities, inextricably plagued by general social decay and the inflated real estate market, are becoming increasingly inhospitable places to live. We may well see a demographic shift toward smaller communities of scale which foster greater local political autonomy, and we will almost certainly see some shift away from occupational mobility in the professional class in favor of stability and family connectedness. In that sense, I think Piccone is on to something — this resurgence of a new communitarianism will not be a simple return to traditional restrictiveness, but a voluntary assertion of the benefits inherent in geographical stability and social interdependence.

Siegel: You seem to be beating around the bush for a kind of populism. Traditional populism was also rooted in an organic sense of community which, however, does not exist any more.

Anderson: I think it exists, but I do not think there is presently a political language with which it can be expressed.

Taves: I do not understand what you mean by political language. What is wrong with wanting to protect my community against the influx of crime as related to poverty?

Siegel: It is considered racist.

Taves: But it is still a political language.

Siegel: There is no language which allows one to legitimately express fear of crime without becoming exposed to the charge of racism. Worse yet, communitarian language is checkmated on both sides of the political spectrum. In the case of the Democrats, Republicans will say that those talking about community are also, to quote Pat Buchanan, card-carrying members of the ACLU. And they will be entirely correct: the ACLU positions on pornography, child pornograpy, prostitution etc. are exactly the kinds of things that destroy communities.

Within the Democratic party you have one set of contradictions; within the Republican party you have another. The logical outcome is that in neither

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case do you have anything to construct community out of. The social disintegration which the Democrats once embraced as liberating is not going to be halted by the measures they are proposing, even though on the economic side some of the things they have to say are very worthwhile in terms of free trade, plant closing legislation and helping families. On the Republican side, for all their talk about stability and traditional values, their policies, by and large, give free reign to those market forces which corrode communities faster than anything else. So, essentially, the communitarian spirit is stuck between social engineers and free marketeers, and it finds it difficult to survive.

Anderson: Before we wrap it up, I want to return to something Taves asked, but we never concretely addressed: What does communitarianism have to do with radical politics? A lot of people who consider themselves cultural radicals or progressives constantly invoke both radicalism and communitarianism. They somehow seem to see those things as linked.

Piccone: They are also deeply confused. We have already discussed the extent to which communitarianism cuts across traditional political lines. Within the Left as such, it refers to a deeper division between those segments who trace their philosophical pedigree back to the Enlightenment (and understand radical politics as the fulfillment of the Enlightenment/bourgeois project), and those who see the Left as a post-Hegelian radical break with that same Enlightenment and capitalism.

As Arthur Rosenberg indicated decades ago in his brilliant but long-forgotten *History of Bolshevism*, the Enlightenment wing turns neo-Kantian and positivist, and eventually regresses to the crude materialism of Lenin, Diamat, and the Old Left (both revisionist or bureaucratic collectivist). Within this tradition, communitarianism ultimately appears as an updated version of Romantic reaction: the nostalgic longing for a long-gone pre-modern society impossible to resurrect from its well-deserved demise. The other tradition, which Ernst Bloch described as "the warm stream" within Marxism, does not fare much better. To the extent that it projects qualitative changes everywhere, from property relations to consciousness, it unavoidably falls short of its goal and, in the rare but crucial cases where it has successfully risen to political power, it attempts to impose it from above. The results are Stalinism, Maoism and the Cambodian holocaust. Here, communitarianism blends in with party programs and degenerates in the well-known predicament of "really existing socialism."

In both cases, communitarianism either falls altogether outside standard Left projects of socio-economic rationalization, or it tends to slide into totalitarianism. To the extent that the Left is still tied to an eschatological philosophy of history, it is doomed to treating communitarianism as either nostalgia or collectivism, depending on whether it is relegated to an irretrievable past or projected into an inevitable future. In either case, it remains checkmated in an

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ontological dimension untranslatable into any concrete political program.

As for the *practical* anti-intellectual Left engaged in concrete politics, communitarianism remains an irresistible horizon, at least as long as it is not contaminated by "really existing" people. In this case, the *practical* Left redefines itself as the advocate of the people's objective interests and, by automatically collapsing this metaphysically-deduced objective popular interest with its own socio-political ideals, hypostatizes itself to the role of a catalytic apparatus. Of course, when discrepancies arise between this New Class leadership (inevitably tending towards bureaucratization) and real people, it is the latter who end up deemed in need of re-education. At any rate, the Left can relate to communitarianism only as a "feeling" which can in no way be politically operationalized other than by precipitating scores of undesirable unintended consequences.

Lastly, Critical Theory, both in its traditional Adornian and the updated, eclectic Habermaniac variety, has nothing to add. Adorno readily falls in line with the traditional Old Left in condemning communitarianism as Romantic reaction (implicitly identified with the Nazis' attempts to recreate a mythical Aryan community); and Habermas can only identify it with idealized graduate seminars composed of disembodied speakers seeking to come to a trivial consensus on irrelevant issues. To the extent that all meaning is relegated to abstract discourse, the rest of the communitarian traditional iceberg — which only during serious crises comes to consciousness and becomes the subject of critical scrutiny — remains not only submerged but philosophically repressed. In both cases, classical or conformist Critical Theory has nothing to add.

Only a reconstituted Critical Theory, cleansed both of any residual eschatological philosophy of history, as well as of any purely communicative fads, may be able to tackle the thorny problem of communitarianism and its implications. In order to do so, however, it will have to carefully re-examine the theory of the culture industry, alienated, narcissistic or dependent individuality, liberal political philosophy, and the long-repressed but increasingly indispensable dialectical logic without which all the bureaucratized academic imagination can do is re-package old ideas.

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*Strong Liberalism**

Wolfgang Fach and Giovanna Procacci

Early in 1988, Sandel urged the Democratic Party to make "community" an important, if not the central issue of this presidential campaign. A few months later, *Time*, summarizing the Democratic National Convention, praised Dukakis for "having found strength in a new theme: community."[1] This is not to say that, in America of all places, philosophers have finally become kings. But it does mean that philosophy and politics need not be worlds apart. One of political philosophy's practical uses may be *to reveal the hidden agenda of politics* by exploring the latent implications of political ideologies.

A while ago, Sandel was the *spiritus rector* of a more general and much stronger attack against liberalism's defection from community.[2] At that time he claimed that, without a strong dose of "fraternity" not only the liberal party but liberal *society* would be doomed in the long run. This "communitarian" verdict was aimed specifically at Rawls, who for "modern" liberals had become sort of a local hero. His philosophy of justice[3] finally allowed them to make peace with the welfare state — at least in principle. Until that time liberals had run a great risk of going out of fashion because they could neither accept "interventionism" nor could they stop it. From the communitarian critique they were now to learn that a healthy "commonwealth" demanded even more *esprit de*

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* A previous version of this essay has appeared in French in MAUSS, 23 (September 1987), pp. 101-29.

1. Michael J. Sandel, "Democrats and Community," *The New Republic* (February 22, 1988), pp. 20-23; *Time* (August 1, 1988), p. 14.

2. Michael J. Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

3. John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971).

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corps than can be embedded in welfare budgets.

The key word in this controversy has been and still is "thinness." In an innovative move, Rawls uses "thin" theories to gain purchase where other attempts to ground liberalism failed. But the communitarians think this theoretical leanness was bought at too great a cost. "Thinness" to them means that modern Western democracies are sewn from a loose social fabric — too loose to endure the tensions of economic or moral crises. Liberal man comes off in this critique as a "thin man" in a derogatory sense, a narrow man, shorn of the capacity to truly share his fellow citizen's fate.

Liberals of all countries felt deeply hurt by this critique[4] and were unwilling to grant the point. Their reaction was, in the main, that liberalism's secret sympathy for the "habits of the heart" (Tocqueville) would allow for all the communitarian values a modern society needed. This reaction comes down to defending by submitting, and it takes the unpredictable risk of giving up liberal "essentials." Yet liberalism is "strong" enough to come out better, i.e., its political *stability* does *not* depend on adopting communitarian ideas. The full scope of liberalism can only be grasped once certain hidden consequences of its first principles have been followed to their final conclusions. Why today's mainstream liberals still wish for more community in spite of the intrinsic robustness of their native tradition remains to be explained.

Liberalism, Justice, and Fairness

Liberalism's most treasured virtue is *liberty*. As liberals always have understood this basic value, it creates *individualistic* ways of life, based on differing interests and guarded by common rights. Hence liberalism centers on procedures for evaluating "the relative values of the several liberties when they come into conflict."[5] The liberal solution to this problem is to design institutional mechanisms ensuring coexistence and compromise. However, from the very beginning (i.e., the French Revolution), such arrangements have actually had a hybrid character and have embodied not only liberal principles of economic "interests" and legal "rights," but also social "duties" of a clearly non-liberal origin.

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4. The international echo is reflected in articles like Chantal Mouffe's, "Le libéralisme américain et ses critiques," *Esprit* (March 1987) pp. 100-14; Stephen Mulhall's "The Theoretical Foundations of Liberalism," *Archives européennes de sociologie*, Vol. 28 (1987), pp. 269-95; and Richard Rorty's "Der Vorrang der Demokratie vor der Philosophie," *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung*, Vol. 42, No. 1 (1988), pp. 3-17.

5. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, *op. cit.*, p. 201.

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These alien elements have traditionally been subsumed under "fraternity," where these social *duties* were reconceived as components of a human *right*: the "right" to solidarity. This in turn has kept them close to the liberal ground, their advocates' revolutionary furor notwithstanding.[6] By and large, fraternity came to mean social security organized by the state to make up for the economic risks of a free market. In short, what fraternity meant in practice was social *insurance*.[7]

But liberal *theory* continued to reject "fraternity" as a foreign body, whether conceived as the value of solidarity or the right to a safety-net. According to its premises, the only security compatible with a free (-market) society is "the great variety of opportunities." Interferences with the market system were seen as reducing that variety and resulting in a situation where "the striving for security tends to become stronger than the love of freedom," and "no longer independence, but security, gives rank and status."[8] Deep resentments like this, eloquently expressed by "organic intellectuals," and incessantly hammered into common sense, account for the fact that liberalism kept an "ugly face," while "socialist" traditions of all sorts could effectively claim a Samaritan's monopoly.

Rawls enabled the liberal creed to overcome this impasse by modernizing itself. Ultimately, his *A Theory of Justice* comes down to re-inventing the idea of a insurance-type public welfare system, and demonstrating that it is perfectly compatible with liberalism. In his words, liberalism's challenge was "to mitigate the influence of social contingencies and natural fortune on distributive shares." Otherwise, social life would operate like a "natural lottery," and the thoroughly arbitrary outcomes could not possibly be justified.[9] Rawls' concern, then, is not inequality but *arbitrariness*, and his objective is not equality but *justice*, i.e., generally accepted and agreed upon inequality. This is what distinguishes his position from the socialist program.

To meet this standard, any change of the *status quo* must be to the advantage of the least advantaged; wherever benefits for the rich occur,

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6. The "re-liberalizing" effect of "human rights" has been pointed out in Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Viking, 1963), pp. 131ff. To be sure, Arendt discusses the American Bill of Rights, which did not include the "fraternal moment," while in the European context the question of whether there is something like a "right" to solidarity has always been highly controversial.

7. Cf. François Ewald, *L'Etat Providence* (Paris: Grasset, 1986).

8. Friedrich A. Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976; originally published in 1944).

9. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, *op. cit.*, pp. 72-75

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they must benefit the poor.[10] Thanks to this reciprocity, all citizens are equally attached to unequal conditions, supporting a "cooperative scheme" which limits the risks of social life by linking up personal fates. This is *fairness* conceived as a quality of a liberal system, not as an attitude of liberal man. The difference matters, because a liberal society cannot rely on altruistic motives. Or, more precisely, liberalism admits only of an "egoistic altruism," where altruistic actions are a result of egoistic calculations (as in Adam Smith's notorious butcher, who satisfies his customers' demands, but not out of "sympathy").

The question remains, why liberal man should join such a "cooperative scheme" at all. For the argument to be convincingly "liberal," the decision to participate in a collective enterprise has to rely on individualistic reasoning. Egoistic altruism supplies the answer. The cooperation of actors is founded on their individual uncertainty. In a lottery-like natural state, no one knows what will happen. Hence everyone has reason to think about his own future and about the advantage of being somehow *insured* in case of need (illness, unemployment, poverty etc.) The "cooperative scheme" spares considerable risk insofar as one can count on a minimum level of institutionalized relief, financed by the "premiums" of the lucky better-off. Thus liberalism turns "social" on its own ground: "justice as fairness intends to account for social values, for the intrinsic good of constitutional community and associative activities by a conception of justice that in its theoretical basis is individualistic."[11]

Beyond the veil of ignorance, the "well-ordered society" resembles a kind of "insurance company," rationally organized according to a calculus of risk. Rawls explicitly regards this construction as an answer to "many socialist criticisms of the market economy." But whatever its merits vis-à-vis the socialist critique, Rawls has certainly demonstrated the theoretical *compatibility* of liberalism and the welfare state.

The "Thinness" of Fairness

In the wake of a large-scale political realignment, Rawls' "Keynesian" philosophy[12] has been challenged by a "communitarian" position claiming that, in order to survive, societies must depend less on liberal justice than on spiritual compactness, less on "individual rights" than

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 75-83.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 264.
12. Ian Shapiro, *The Evolution of Rights in Liberal Theory* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 204ff.

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on "social goods," and less on "legalistic rules" than on the "law of the heart."[13] Some communitarians believe that this kind of emotional "density" derives from social proximity, and others maintain that such feelings are based in a common moral "telos."[14] But all share an understanding that liberalism does not provide the philosophical underpinning for a "vital" commonwealth.

Rawls[15] has tried to banish these doubts by stressing the limited role of justice, which is seen as the legal lattice-work supporting a wide variety of social relations, distinguished by both their narrower scope and higher intensity. He argues that even if love or sympathy are not considered to be part of the social contract, and for that reason are not essential elements of a "well-ordered" commonwealth, it is their presence which makes for a fully-developed texture of social life.[16]

This liberal response to the communitarian challenge falls short in two respects. First, liberal individuals, by entering the social contract as separate and independent actors, may also fail to display "moral depth" and emotional engagement.[17] Second, and even more irritating, *A Theory of Justice* proposes to submit *any* kind of interaction, down to the most intimate kind of personal relations, to the principles of justice.[18] In practice, such adjudication erodes all those feelings that might "thicken" to organic density.

There is, consequently, no way out of the fragile existence of the "thin man," living in a "thin" society "which lacks genuine moral consensus" (MacIntyre) or genuine social sympathy. "Thinness" is a theoretical predicament from which even Rawls has been unable to rescue liberalism. But that said, the liberal creed has shown remarkable resiliency. While hysterical prophets drivel on about how Western democracies are doomed to perish,[19] the societies in question have fared remarkably

13. Nancy L. Rosenblum, *Another Liberalism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), pp. 34ff.

14. For the first position, see Richard Rorty, "Postmodernist Bourgeois Liberalism," *Journal of Philosophy*, No. 80 (1983), pp. 583-89, and Michael J. Sandel, "The Procedural Republic and the Unencumbered Self," *Political Theory*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (1984), pp. 81-96. For the second position, see Alasdair MacIntyre, "Moral Argument and Social Context," *Journal of Philosophy*, No. 80 (1983), pp. 590-91, and *After Virtue* (Notre Dame, Ind., University of Indiana Press, 1984).

15. John Rawls, "Justice and Fairness: Political not Metaphysical," *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol. 14, No. 3, (1985), pp. 323-51.

16. This is also the essential message of Rosenblum, *Another Liberalism*, *op. cit.*

17. Cf. Sandel, *Limits*, *op. cit.*, p. 182.

18. Rawls, "Justice and Fairness," *op. cit.*, pp. 368-391.

19. Jean François Revel, *How Democracies Perish* (New York: Doubleday, 1984).

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well. This requires an explanation.

The first step is to cut through some common sense so pervasive as to be invisible. Both Rawls and his communitarian critics take for granted that without a widespread sense of community, the liberal ideology is too "thin" a bond to meld a mass of people into a common social unit. (Rawls actually seems to have given more and more ground to his opponents over time.) If this is true, "liberal society" should be understood as something of an oxymoron. The only "society" that could have resulted under liberal auspices would have been a hybrid society that depended vitally on pre-liberal resources. But liberal society is a self-supporting system that has produced its own stability and legitimacy.

The conventional wisdom is expressed succinctly by Unger. "There are two distinct ways to conceive of sharing values. On one view, it is a coincidence of individual preferences, which, even when combined, retain the characteristics of individuality and subjectivity. On another view, it refers to group values that are neither individual nor subjective. If we start from the premises of liberal political thought, we must treat every sharing of values as precarious alliance of ends that simply reveals the subjective preferences of the allies. There is no reason in such a system of thought to expect that these convergences of interest will be stable."[20]

Here the critique of liberalism is presented in its purest form: *liberality destroys stability*. To argue otherwise means to show how the "coincidence of individual preferences" can be *consolidated*. The burden is on us, in other words, to show how society can be stabilized on the basis of *common*, but not *communal* values. In order to make this argument, it is necessary to make a further distinction. Unger's distinction separates two poles of the *density* of integration: groups and societies are "private" or "public," depending on whether shared values/norms are primarily individualistic or collectivistic. But a second distinction can be made concerning the *intensity* of integration. Groups or societies are "closed" or "open" depending on whether shared values/norms direct individual actions rather strictly, or allow for deviant behavior. In the "social space" thereby opened, a "thin" commonwealth based on Rawls' principles of justice may be located as an assemblage of egoistic "bourgeois" lacking any sense of real altruism and true loyalty.

The communitarian critique, considering only the *density*-side of social integration, reads "thickening" exclusively as injecting a spirit of *genuine* altruism, in pursuit of the ideal of public community. It is

20. Roberto M. Unger, *Knowledge and Politics* (New York: Free Press, 1976), p. 102.

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evident that affective overloading of this kind would lead to the end of liberalism. Accordingly, Unger concludes that we "have to abandon the system of liberal political thought."[21] But what this position misses is that liberalism, by strengthening its *intensity*, provides a separate way of "feeding" the "thin man," and this time on a purely liberal recipe. An open society (of a more or less private character) may *close* itself by transforming liberal interests into liberal passions and liberal rights into liberal religions. Hidden traces of this kind of conversion can already be found in the theory of "justice as fairness." When carried out to their logical conclusions, these interests and rights reveal a liberal regime much more robust and much less "liberal" than commonly understood.

Over time, justice has changed from a system of procedures into a set of convictions. Hence *fairness* has "thickened" to what may be called *fitness*: the mood of *strong liberalism*, rallying "passionate" liberals who stick up for their society instead of simply exploiting interesting options and services. The road from "fairness" to "fitness" takes three paths: from liberty to liberalism, from opportunity to Darwinism, and from fraternity to chauvinism.

From Liberty to Liberalism

"Within the affluent democracy, the affluent discussion prevails, and within the established framework, it is tolerant to a large extent. Communist and fascist, the Left and the Right, the white and the Negro, the crusaders for armament and for disarmament. Moreover, in endlessly dragging debates in the media, the stupid opinion is treated with the same respect as the intelligent one, the misinformed may talk as long as the informed, and propaganda rides along with education, truth with falsehood. This pure toleration of sense and nonsense is justified by the democratic [i.e., liberal] argument that nobody, neither group nor individual, is in possession of the truth and capable of defining what is right and wrong, good and bad."[22] Here Marcuse exemplifies the insulted outrage that partisans of those positions "people call ideological, philosophical, or visionary" (Unger) feel in dealing with an all-absorbing pluralism, as idea and institution. As well they might. *Plurality* is the *solvent* of a "well-ordered society," both a lubricant and a dis-solver of thick, challenging ideologies. Belief systems

21. *Ibid.*, p. 102.

22. Herbert Marcuse, "Repressive Tolerance," in Robert Paul Wolff, Barrington Moore, Jr., Herbert Marcuse, *A Critique of Pure Tolerance* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1965), pp. 81-123 (94).

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that point beyond the *status quo* can be kept in check by balancing the truth values of their claims, whereby they are neutralized. It is, therefore, not by chance that justice *à la* Rawls avoids "disputed philosophical, as well as disputed moral and religious, questions." There is a good reason why liberalism chooses deliberately to stay "on the surface"[23] and adjust itself to the variable configuration of conflicting creeds. When people choose their faith "according to the market," it ends up limiting the marketable.

But that is not the whole truth, and Marcuse's critique of the repressive power of tolerant nonsense does not convey the full force of the liberal persuasion. Justice as fairness "seeks to identify the kernel of an overlapping consensus."[24] Eventually, it prescribes *liberty*, *opportunity*, and *fraternity* as common ground. Without subscribing to these liberal core values, no non-liberal ideology will be admitted to the discussion. The very idea of an "entrance examination" points to liberalism's special strength: repression is replaced by assimilation.

Rawls's liberalism is not meant to produce short-lived compromises but rather a penetrating "conviction." If these substantial virtues are to emerge from just procedures, then the principles of justice must themselves represent something substantial. Accordingly, Rawls is quick to rule out any "thin" reading of the spiritual appeasement he has in mind: Justice, he insists, "provides an account of the cooperative virtues suitable for a political doctrine in view of the conditions and requirements of a constitutional regime. It is no less a moral conception, because it is restricted to the basic structure of society, since this restriction is what enables it to serve as a political conception of justice, given our present circumstances. Thus, in an overlapping consensus (as understood here), the conception of justice as fairness is not regarded merely as a '*modus vivendi*'."[25]

In truth, liberalism is a full-scale *civil religion*, along the lines laid down by Rousseau. All the followers of fairness, notwithstanding their differing origins, "have a strong and normally effective desire to act as the principles of justice require."[26] But whatever liberalism dictates, it must come from within: "From the standpoint of justice as fairness, these obligations are self-imposed."

In a word, liberalism in action is the sort of "soulcraft" that conser-

23. Rawls, "Justice and Fairness," *op. cit.*, p. 330.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 346.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 347.
26. Rawls, *A Theory* of Justice, *op. cit.* pp. 206, 454.

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vatives like George Will are looking for. It establishes a set of strong moral beliefs that shape individual character (the relation of the self to the passions) and public interaction (the relation of the self to others). Liberalism does emphasize certain *limits* of mutual moral influence. But the difference between liberals and conservatives here is a matter of degree. Even in Will's interpretation, the hoped-for consensus cannot "be allowed to erase the distinction between public and private spheres. That distinction is indispensable not only to the preservation of a tolerable degree of liberty, but to the preservation of public-spiritedness as well."[27] So, although the line between "public" and "private" is drawn in different places by liberals and conservatives, their goal in drawing it is identical: "to make pluralism safe for society,"[28] or liberty fit for liberalism.

From Opportunity to Darwinism.

"It is a mistake to believe," says Rawls, "that a just and good society must wait upon a high material standard of life. What men want is meaningful work in free association with others, these associations regulating their relations to one another within the framework of just basic institutions."[29] In a society of people with such modest needs, justice is possible by modest means. On the other hand, it is conceivable that, by exploiting the obligatory Rawlsian welfare system, some of the poor may get a more than decent share of what the rich have accumulated. Such a possibility makes Rawls morally indignant. Not "willing to strive" for their living, these people offend against both the "human condition" they are subject to, and the contractual terms they have agreed on. Furthermore, they present a threat to the system. But Rawls sidesteps the issue of sanctions for shirkers: "The resolution of these issues," he insists, "is best left to the political process, provided that the requisite liberties are secure."[30]

On the other hand, liberals have their preferences. Since a well-ordered society is independent of "the material standard of life," dysfunctions that do arise must be a function of defective *character*. Accordingly, character becomes the target of political reform.[31] In times

27. *Ibid.*, p. 127.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 94.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 90.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 372f.
31. See, above all, James Q. Wilson, "The Rediscovery of Character: Private Virtue and Public Policy," *The Public Interest*, No. 81 (1985), pp. 3-16; Cf. also Charles Murray, "No, Welfare Isn't Really the Problem," *The Public Interest*, No. 84 (1986), pp. 3-11.

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of eroding standards and relaxed "striving," the logical continuation of fairness is *workfare*, forced upon the idle for their own good[32] as well as in the name of justice.

Welfare society hoped to save the poor by granting "aid," whether pure or mixed with "incentives." To today's liberals, that strategy failed because it did not grasp that it was dealing with souls that were fundamentally lazy. "Experience shows," according to a typical view, "that benefits and opportunities alone will not overcome a reluctance to work embedded in the attitudes of the welfare class;" this view reflects the latest turn of public opinion and public policy.[33] By contrast with what went before, the leaner and tougher *well-ordered* society is unwilling to waste public funds and instead wields public force: "Low-wage work apparently must be mandated, just as a draft has sometimes been necessary to staff the military. Authority achieves compliance more efficiently than benefits, at least from the society's viewpoint. Government need not make the desired behavior worthwhile to people. It simply metes out punishment (in this case loss of benefits) if they do not comply."[34] Some authors have even described nonwork as a "political act" or a "rebellious action." Exposed to sanction and stigma, the rebels are supposed to surrender unconditionally, not only mending their ways, but also changing their minds — "government must persuade them to *blame themselves*."[35] By these means, what was originally a legal opportunity is transformed into a moral duty and, finally, a personal desire: "We are induced to do the right thing with respect to small matters, and in time we persist in doing the right thing because now we have come to take pleasure in it."[36] By this and similar processes, well-made rules are embodied in well-made citizens. The goal of reform is a full-fledged and well-ordered "work ethic state."[37]

Moreover, the subjects of such a work-obsessed society have to be committed not just to work fairly well but to work *competitively*, for two reasons. In the first place, it is in every individual's objective (even if unconscious) interest to get on and reap the fruits of toil. Those "who, with the prospect of improving their condition, have done what the

32. Glenn C. Loury, "Beyond Civil Rights," *The New Republic* (October 7, 1985), pp. 22-25.
33 Lawrence M. Mead, *Beyond Entitlement* (New York: The Free Press, 1985), p. 86.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 84f.
35. *Ibid.*, p.10.
36. James Q. Wilson, "The Rediscovery of Character," *op. cit.*, p. 15.
37. Mickey Kaus, "The Work Ethic State," *The New Republic* (July 7, 1986), pp. 22-33.

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system announces it will reward are entitled to their advantages," Rawls confirms.[38] That is exactly why equal opportunity, especially equal access to education, forms part of justice. By means of this objective competition, welfare converts into work and, subsequently, inequality — an inequality which, by substituting talent for birth, carries the competitive moment to its *Darwinist* extreme.

The second reason why people must feel moved to self-exploitation is that they have a social obligation to do so in a well-ordered society. "When institutions are just (as defined by this conception), those taking part in these arrangements acquire the corresponding sense of justice and desire to do their part in maintaining it."[39] As partners in that "cooperative venture of mutual advantage" (Rawls's recurrent characterization of a well-ordered society), those with talent have to exploit their assets, and those without have at least to give their best. Hence, where social Darwinism's answer to the question of "What Social Classes Owe to Each Other" was "nothing,"[40] *fair* Darwinism calls for "fitness."

From Fraternity to Chauvinism.

It is amazing to see how *A Theory of Justice*, thinned out almost to the point of unreality, suddenly falls back to blunt realism. After setting out to discover *universal* principles of justice or stability, it settles quietly for the *nation-state* as its frame of reference. And after justice has been thus "nationalized," the world outside the well-ordered society is conceived of as a vastly hostile "environment," roughly pacified by a "law of nations." "One needs in addition principles for the law of nations," reads Rawls' uneasy transition.[41] Its stumbling logic indicates ideological uncertainty.

Even though liberalism has been historically entwined with the interests of particular states, in theory it has considered nationhood an extraneous drag on the liberal world system. "Nothing, I imagine," James Steuart admitted in 1767, "but a universal monarchy, governed by the same laws, and administered according to one plan well concerted, can be compatible with an universally open trade."[42] Similarly,

38. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, *op. cit.* p. 103.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 454.
40. William Graham Sumner, *What Social Classes Owe to Each Other* (New York: Ayer, 1972; originally published in 1883)
41. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, *op. cit*, p. 107.
42. Quoted in Istvan Hont, "The 'Rich Country-Poor Country' Debate in Scottish Classical Political Economy," in I. Hont, M. Ignatieff, eds., *Wealth and Virtue* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 271-317.

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liberal justice, in theory, should be free from restriction. But in Rawls as in common practice, it runs up against "natural" limits. The "natural lottery," consistent with real history, turns out to be a national lottery, distributing destinies only within national economies. Hence, behind their "veils," the players are far less "ignorant" than indicated. Most importantly, they are presumed to know about punishments and prizes in "foreign" lotteries beyond their reach. In the liberal mind, this discrepancy has spawned an appropriate *chauvinism* that is defensive against foreign claims (e.g., for aid), and offensive against foreign resistance to share "the wealth of nations" (e.g., by opening up their markets). Congenial with the needs of affluent liberalism, fair justice *à la* Rawls centers on guarding the homeland — at least initially.

The chauvinist bias encroaches upon innocent justice through the ominous "law of nations." Rawls repeats a familiar standpoint on the subject: "The basic principle of the law of nations is a principle of equality. Independent people organized as states have certain fundamental equal rights. This principle is analogous to the equal rights of citizens in a constitutional regime. One consequence of this equality of nations is the principle of self-determination, the right of a people to settle its own affairs without the intervention of foreign powers."[43] This ends up defining international relations as if it were a sphere of liberty and opportunity that was unbridled by fraternity. Hence, international justice elevates the interest of rich countries, namely to foster their national "brotherhoods" without caring about the fate of their poor neighbors, into a moral claim.

Although thought to be "justified," wealth differentials have never ceased to be a focus of unending disturbances in the "liberal" world system. Depending on whether these differentials deepen or flatten, rich countries feel surrounded by either vicious envy or unfair competition. A myth of the nation as a "fortress" (Robert Reich), gives rise to a resounding "call to arms" (Kevin Phillips) for waging wars of ideas and, eventually, weapons. Thus, in the name of fraternity at home, liberalism is driven to "go abroad."

This ideological offensive, spreading out the message of liberalism's fundamental superiority and universal applicability, is thought to establish the liberal model of progress as global common sense. One voice among many bluntly declares: "Development is the process by which people in the poorer countries are to reach the levels of material

43. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, *op. cit.* p. 378.

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life achieved in the countries of advanced industrial capitalism."[44] Having identified progress of humanity with increase of consumption, liberal preaching goes on to reassure lagging countries that approving their misery would be the surest way of improving it, for the "inclusion of a Third World country within the international capitalist system tends to favor its development."[45] It goes without saying that to "develop" also the Second World would only be "fair" — as "the collective activity of justice is the preeminent form of human flourishing."[46] The international order is not "just" until every corner is liberal.

Under cover of the law of nations, universalism turns into a revised and perverted version of *justice as imperialism*, entitling rich (i.e., Western) countries to expand the foundation of their wealth. "Just" expansion launches "just wars," and the international battlefield reconstructs that virtuous element which has been banished from the international marketplace: fraternity. Brethren in belief march as comrades in arms, practicing "the right of self-defense against attack, including the right to form defensive alliances." Liberal societies force their reluctant souls to fight "for the defense of liberty itself, including here not only the liberties of the society in question, but also those of persons in other societies as well."[47] Chauvinism is like the liberalism of small print. Citizens find that by signing the insurance contract they have agreed to die for the insurance company. To deny that one implies the other is an "unworldly view" according to Rawls. It is a criminal offence against liberal logic for, as Skinner conclusively argues, "a readiness to volunteer for active service, to join the armed services, to perform one's military services, constitutes a necessary condition of maintaining one's own individual freedom."[48] So this is yet another way in which the "thin man" gets fit: from time to time he is supposed to stop calculating and be a hero.[49]

Another Liberalism?

As such, the "thin man" has swollen remarkably large, and strong liberalism keeps feeding him with ideas widely held to be illiberal. To play off a good heart against the closed mind will scarcely work because

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44. Peter L. Berger, *The Capitalist Revolution* (New York, Basic Books, 1986), p. 116.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 129.
46 Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, *op. cit.* p. 529.
47. *Ibid.*, pp. 378, 380.
48. Quentin Skinner, "The Idea of Negative liberty: Philosophical and Historical Perspectives," in Richard Rorty, J. B. Schneewind, Quentin Skinner, eds., *Philosophy in History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 193-221 (213).
49. Rosenblum, *op.cit.*, pp. 103-151.

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the connection, even if usually hidden, is nonetheless real.[50] In fact, even Rawls seems to feel uneasy with his intellectual offspring; at least he is more generous in granting a right of resistance to dissenters than mainstream liberals would approve.[51] But his generosity is misleading. He takes for granted that disobedience observes what he calls "civility," which is in fact a supererogatory mindfulness about society's well-ordering. (At one point, the *victims* of liberal repression are supposed to flip a coin for the right to resist, lest the system get overloaded by complaints.)[52] Again, a loophole is no sooner opened than it is closed.

Among more reflective friends of liberalism, this doctrinaire zeal has caused some embarrassment. Of the various therapies proffered, the most promising are those which tackle the root of the evil: the self-increasing "intensity" of liberal values. The overall strategy is to "open" society by inserting into its texture behavioral margins, from allowing more deviance to dismantling normality. Basically, two varieties have been offered, reflecting different models of how the polity should operate. Their passwords are "particularity" and "ambiguity" respectively.

Particularity and Ambiguity.

One way of loosening the grip of liberalism may be to extend the *range of social pluralism*. If tolerance is extended to non-liberal alternatives, then liberalism loses its privileged position. "The subculture that envisages its values as universal and its style as cosmopolitan" — i.e., liberalism — "is no less a subculture for all that. The tribal patterns evident at an Upper West Side cocktail party are no less tribal than those evident at a Polish dance in Greenpoint, Brooklyn. That the former is produced by the interaction of people trying to transcend many particularisms simply results in a new, and not necessarily more interesting, particularism."[53] This "praise of particularity"[54] tacitly shifts the ground: pluralism does not lead to unity any more, but ends up in the coexistence of different "tribes," rallying people according to the affinity of backgrounds and biographies. Because this "tribal" pattern allows

50. This also holds true when the good hearts come not with simple brains but burning souls, one of Rosenblum's favorite combinations (*op.cit.*). However pure their motives are, strong liberalism invariably will squeeze them into its ethic of work and war.

51. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, *op. cit.* p. 374.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 374.

53. Peter, L. Berger, Richard N. Neuhaus, *To Empower People* (Washington: American Enterprise Institute, 1977), p. 43.

54. Peter L. Berger, "In Praise of Particularity: The Concept of Mediating Structures," *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 38 (1976), pp. 399-410.

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little social mobility and no public opinion, the mode of integration changes from mediating between people to *separating* them. This establishes a social order of non-interference wherein several cultures, even incompatible ones, may co-exist. Hence, life becomes ghetto life, conducted in small and beautiful enclosures, behind the wall of destiny; and society turns into a patchwork of "little platoons." But this would not necessarily sap the strength of liberalism. On the contrary, being the dominant ghetto, it might emerge re-fortified if it is forced once again to struggle with stubborn dissent.

The second strategy for reforming liberal orthodoxy suggests an extension of the *range of individual tolerance*. For this to happen, the liberal mind should undergo an operation of self-detachment in order to put itself in "other" positions. The liberal mood loses its former rigidity and by relaxing turns into *irony*. It is the irony of knowing. To those who know better, normality is not *per se* normal, and madness may represent reason. Behind the wall of irony, there is neither pride nor prejudice; unimpressed by the prejudices of common sense and public interest, the self serenely enjoys the colors of life. Individual irony creates a social "order with slack," where "imperatives are relaxed."[55] It is an order "in which it is less *necessary* to draw so much of the self into the orbit of social control through observation, normalizing judgment, incentive systems, coercion, and the cultivation of civic virtue. An order that can afford to relax the reins of social control in these ways is one that can allow a rather broad range of behavior to simply *be*, only lightly touched by the pressure of normative standards. Where normative standards are essential, it would still be possible to define a large range of behavior as odd, strange, eccentric, or wayward, without embodying these negative judgments in such sanctions as illegality, delinquency, abnormality, irrationality, perversity, and obsolescence."[56]

This ideal of a stylistic crucible, establishing an "ironic" regime over self-"ironic" ways of life, is another friendly amendment to liberalism. Where black people tolerate white people, the poor understand the rich, and housewives care for their husbands, or vice versa, there reality is not de-constructed except as a thought. Hence liberalism remains intact, comfortably surviving as the dominant irony in an "ambiguous" company with harmless eccentrics or helpless victims. Neither of

55. William E. Connolly, *Politics and Ambiguity* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), p. 113.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 96.

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these strategies is designed to go beyond liberalism.[57] Decreasing the intensity of liberal feelings is more a way of rescuing it, be it by separation or "cohabitation," than of advancing to some "post-liberal" era.

Power and Liberty.

Particularity and ambiguity open quite different paths to an extended liberalism. Life in an indifferent ghetto-society is clearly regressive, while the principle of pure irony stimulates progressive change. Both approaches, however, share the same methodology: Liberalizing liberalism operates by opening the social contract to excluded ways of living (either of individuals or of groups). Extension of tolerant behavior coincides with inclusion in a contractual system; in the beginning is always the contract. Its logic defines social relations as arrangements between individuals (groups), placing them in reciprocal and symmetrical positions: reciprocal, because the parties *connect* their opposite positions; and symmetrical, because they *agree* to do so (i.e., the contract establishes equidistance). Hence, linking liberality to contract implies that new parties are admitted if, and only if, they acknowledge common ground rules. To get equal rights, they must fit their interests into the space of compromise and consensus. In that way critique is replaced by understanding, change by exchange, and power disappears behind the veil of tolerance.

Indifference (in particularity), irony (in ambiguity), and fairness (in the conformity required by Rawls) are varieties of a "superficial" liberalism, which constantly scales down the question of power. Duplicating the blindness of contractual practice, contractual thinking neglects that social actors are social "products." Addressing the social production of liberal individuals means breaking through the system of reciprocal symmetries. In other words, it is a matter of reintroducing those asymmetries of *power* that are levelled out by the agreement of free wills.[58]

Liberalism and Community

Conceived as a *value system*, liberalism is strong enough to hold its

57. Andrew Sullivan, "Hearts and Rights," *The New Republic* (March 7, 1988) pp. 35-38

58. To be sure, the investigation of power has never been liberalism's favorite occupation. Liberals tend to prefer "social criticism by inches." And American liberals were never forced to hear "the distant roar of the battle." See Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979); Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1962); and Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Random House, 1979), p. 308.

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own without communitarian reinforcement. Far from being limited to "soft" or "flabby" principles, it offers deep and militant convictions — but *for liberals only*. For people on the wrong side of the contract, liberalism can be too strong. They may easily drop out if not supported by family, friends or neighbors. And in crises like these, liberty indeed depends on community. But in cases such as these, community is nothing more that a *psychological support* to keep the contractual society running. In Walzer's words: "The contract is a moral bond. It connects the strong and the weak, the lucky and the unlucky, the rich and the poor, creating a union that transcends all differences of interest, drawing its strength from history, culture, religion, language, and so on."[59] With "contract" so broadly conceived, who needs "community?"

59. Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), p. 82f.

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Relegitimating Meritocracy: Educational Policy as Technocratic Strategy

Frank Fischer and Alan Mandell

The educational crisis is front-page news. Daily newspaper articles, television specials, and political campaign coverage regularly carry stories of blue-ribbon commission reports on the sad condition of American schools. During the 1980s, at least two dozen major reports have appeared.[1] Each claims that the crisis of education is at the root of the troublesome 15 year decline in national industrial productivity and thus central to the country's sliding competitive edge — particularly when compared with Japan and West Germany. The failure of the schools is even said to be reflected in the character of the population and the ingenuity of the American work force. As the National Commission on Excellence in Education states in its report, *A Nation at Risk*, the core issue is the very future of "American prosperity, security, civility." The report captured the threat in these words: "If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war. As it stands, we have allowed this to happen to ourselves."[2]

While the reports differ in specific recommendations, they point to numerous symptoms of educational decline: low test scores, the failure of schools to make appropriately high academic demands on students,

1. For a list of the reports considered here, see Philip G. Altbach, Gail P. Kelly and Lois Weiss, eds., *Excellence in Education* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1985), pp. 41-42.

2. National Commission on Excellence in Education, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*, reprinted in Ronald Gross and Beatrice Gross, eds. *The Great School Debate: Which Way for American Education?* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985), p. 23.

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dangerously lax levels of school discipline, the absence of rigorous and systematically applied criteria for promotion from one grade to the next, curriculae too vulnerable to the vicissitudes of student choice, and a precipitous drop in mathematical, scientific, technological and foreign language studies.[3] In particular, they single out the lack of adequate computer training, deemed essential to meaningful participation in a technological society. On top of these failures, the reports assert that public support for education has declined, and that confidence in the schools is at an all-time low. Underlying these analyses is the conviction that high school and college graduates are, at best, mediocre.[4]

The issues raised by the failures of the school system are, on all accounts, profoundly troublesome. Not only do they involve the low quality of educational achievement *per se*, they also concern the schools' failures to promote and sustain the values of democracy. Such problems are most poignantly evident in the schools of the poor — institutions that are truly in a state of crisis. It is thus not surprising that most people have accepted this interpretation of the crisis, and are now convinced that our educational institutions are the main cause of deteriorating economic and social conditions.

What the reports call for is a comprehensive educational strategy built around a national consensus. Toward this end, a language of "excellence" is put forward as a framework to guide the search for consensus. Excellence has emerged as an organizing ideology of meritocratic reform designed to cure the deep malaise threatening the future of high-tech America.[5] Underlying the rhetoric of excellence, however, is an attempt to instrumentalize the crisis for extraneous particularistic interests having little to do with improving education. Indeed, this manipulation is central to an understanding of the crisis.[5]

Basic to a critical analysis of the reform strategy is an examination of the troublesome assumptions upon which it rests. What is at issue here is not the educational crisis *per se*, but rather its definition and what it assumes. Consider some of the most important working assumptions of the reports. Nothing plays a more significant role in the accepted

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3. Sheila Slaughter, "Main-Traveled Road or Fast-Track" (in *Ibid.*) and Svi Shapiro "Capitalism at Risk: The Political Economy of the Educational Reports of 1983" *Educational Theory*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (Winter, 1985), pp.57-72. Both offer useful analyses of the *differences* among the reports.

4. See Gail P. Kelley "Setting the Boundaries of Debate about Education" in Altbach, Kelly andWeiss, *op. cit.*, pp. 31-42.

5. See Ira Shor, *Culture Wars: School and Society in the Conservative Restoration, 1969-1984* (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986).

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portrait of the educational crisis than the schools' failures to provide students with the kinds of skills needed to succeed in high-tech America. Essential to the reform ideology is the long-standing belief that schools must be the path to the work place. That is, it is assumed that a basic function of modern education is to provide students with appropriate job skills and work-relevant values and attitudes. According to the commission reports, American schools, blind to the exigencies of a high-tech world, are not fulfilling this role.

The commissions' facts, however, are questionable. Whereas the reports typically assume the need for high-tech training, recent studies of the labor market paint a radically different picture. Most job growth is occurring in areas that require the *least* skill — especially those jobs found in the expanding service sector of the economy. The Bureau of Labor Statistics, for example, demonstrates that even when high-tech industries are most broadly defined, they "will account for only a small proportion of new jobs through 1995."[6] The Bureau maintains that between 23.4 and 28.6 million new jobs will be created between 1982 and 1995. Of these, it is estimated that only between 1.0 and 4.6 million will be in high-tech industries.[7] Most strikingly, growth in such job categories as building custodian, cashier, secretary, kitchen helper, guard and doorkeeper are all above the percentage of total job growth in areas such as computer systems analyst, programmer and even computer operator.[8]

Even more fundamental is the failure to grapple with the extremely uncertain relation between education and job skills. In fact, no premise is more essential to modern educational ideologies than the belief that education is basic to economic development, especially in advanced technological societies. This presupposes that schooling requirements for jobs steadily increase because of technological change, and that it is the schools that provide the training demanded of more highly-skilled

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6. Richard Richie, D.E. Hecker, and John V. Burgan, "High-technology Today and Tomorrow: A Small Slice of the Employment Pie," *Monthly Labor Review* (November, 1983), p. 50. See also "Study Calls Most New Jobs Low Paying," *San Francisco Chronicle* (November 10, 1986) which describes a study by Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison for the Joint Economic Committee of Congress.

7. Michael Black, and Richard Worthington, "The Center for Industrial Innovation at RPI: Critical Reflections on New York's Economic Recovery" in Morton Schoolman, and Alvin Magad, eds., *Reindustrializing New York State* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1986), pp. 257-280.

8. See Henry Levin and Russell W. Rumberger "Hi-Tech Requires Few Brains," *The Washington Post* (January 30, 1983), p. C5. Also see Stanley Aronowitz and Henry Giroux, *Education Under Siege: The Conservative, Liberal and Radical Debate Over Schooling* (South Hadley, MA: Bergin and Garvey, 1985), especially their chapter, "Is Computer Technology the Answer?: The Crisis in the Classroom and Educational Reform," pp. 185-98.

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employment.[9] But the evidence to support these claims is remarkably thin. An extensive review of the literature on the link between education and jobs not only concludes that there is "no clear contribution to economic development beyond the provision of mass literacy," but that education is often "irrelevant" or even "counterproductive" to on-the-job productivity.[10] On the contrary, studies show that it is work experience itself, not formal school instruction, that most effectively contributes to job competence. Schooling is not, in short, a highly efficient method of training the work force.

A second issue is the commissions' emphasis on testing. While many reports lay great emphasis on the decline of national examination scores, the evidence is often misleading and, at times, inaccurate. Numerous educational experts have in fact shown that the question of declining scores is questionable. Moreover, even where statistical evidence of decline is valid, its causes are open to a wide range of interpretations. For example, while it is true that between 1952 and 1982, the *average* Scholastic Aptitude Test verbal score did fall some 50 points, by 1982 (the year before most of the national reports were made public), SAT scores had actually begun to rise, a reality recently confirmed by a Congressional Budget Office Study.[11] Furthermore, other indicies like the NAEP (National Assessment of Educational Progress) Reading Test for the years 1971, 1975 and 1980 showed that 17-year olds "were doing about as well in their total reading ability as they were ten years earlier."[12] There is also striking evidence of systematically increasing scores in Law School and Medical College admission tests, as well as rising scores on a significant number of the College Board's own achievement tests.[13]

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9. Randall Collins, *The Credential Society: An Historical Sociology of Education and Stratification* (New York: Academic Press, 1979).

10. *Ibid.*, Chapter 1, "The Myth of Technocracy." Also see Ivan Berg, *Education and Jobs: The Great Training Robbery* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971).

11. See Ernest Boyers (The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching), *High School: A Report on Secondary Education in America*, p. 26; Lawrence C. Stedman and Karl F. Kaestle, "The Test Score Decline Is Over: Now What?" *Phi Delta Kappan* (November, 1985), pp. 204-10; and Stephen Judy, *The ABC's of Literacy: A Guide for Parents and Educators* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980).

12. NAEP test scores cited in Boyers, *op. cit.*

13. See Shor, *Culture Wars*, *op. cit.*, pp. 71-75. Interestingly, improvement in minority group scores that "was largest for Blacks." As the College Board itself documented, "for most minority groups the improvement from 1981 to 1982 was larger than the overall national gain." SAT verbal score for Blacks, for instance, rose 9 points and the math score rose 4 points. Significantly, this meant that the gap between minorities and whites was narrowing "at a fairly steady pace," a fact rarely recognized by those convinced of a generalized decline.

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Given the complexities surrounding the problem of testing, the decline of scores hardly seems certain. Most test scores and their use in debates over the educational crisis have added confusion to an already complicated situation. The point here is this: Instead of directly examining the concrete school experiences that constitute this social tragedy, the commissions by and large rely on problematic data to portray the crisis.

Also, at issue is the commission reports' abiding faith in a set of traditional beliefs about the historical role of educational institutions. In this view, schools effectively serve to further the American ideals of democracy, equality, upward mobility, and economic development. Recent analyses of their role, however, have raised serious doubts about the relation between schooling and commitment to these values. These studies have revealed the many ways in which schools have buttressed class-privilege, created inequalities, and distorted democratic ideals.[14] It is, from this viewpoint, the power of a "legend" that most animates the reports and public understanding of the schools.[15] Critical histories of American education clearly show that schools have been used to mediate economic inequalities and social dislocations precipitated by capitalist transformations. School reforms have thus been intimately connected with the conflicts between the American democratic ethos and economic disparities. Specifically, there have been three central junctures in which schools were called upon to rationalize and legitimate basic economic transformations.

In the first reform period, from the late 1830s through the 1840s, "common schools" were to become "the balance wheel of the social machinery," responding to growing urban population, the decline of skilled craftsmen, and the demise of self-sufficient farmers.[16] The common school curriculum was established as the basis of a new moral education molding students' character through new forms of social control.

Between 1890 and 1920 schools were again used to promote socio-economic transformation: in this case from an entrepreneurial world to

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14. Cf., Joel Spring, *The Sorting Machine: National Educational Policy Since 1945* (New York: McKay, 1976); Ira Katznelson and Margaret Weir, *Schooling for All (New York: Basic Books, 1985); Michael B.Katz, Class, Bureaucracy, and Schools* (New York: Praeger, 1971); Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, *Schooling in Capitalist America* (New York: Basic Books, 1976); David Nasaw, *Schooled to Order: A Social History of Public Schooling in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979); and Martin Carnoy and Henry M. Levin, *Schooling and Work in the Democratic State* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1985).

15. Colin Greer, *The Great School Legend: A Revisionist Interpretation of American Public Education* (New York: Viking, 1973), p. 33.

16. Horace Mann, cited in Merle Curti, *The Social Ideas of American Educators* (Totowa, NJ: Littlefield, Adams, 1974), p. 134. Also cited in Bowles and Gintis, *op. cit.*, p.167

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one dominated by large-scale bureaucratic firms. It was only a new professional elite of "education executives" trained in the hierarchical organizational techniques of scientific management and the canons of business efficiency that could reshape the school in the image of a modern factory system. The introduction of the "comprehensive high school" became the institutional mechanism for "Americanizing" immigrant groups (frequently seen at the forefront of labor radicalism) and for extending the requisite training and internalizing the new patterns of authority demanded of an evolving corporate managerial revolution.[17]

The third period of educational reform followed WWII and resulted in the creation of a multi-tiered hierarchical system that provided both a place for a new working middle class clientele and insurance that elite universities could maintain their selectivity and privileged status. While the establishment of community colleges was designed to train students for middle and lower level white collar positions, what is crucial here is the transformation on the elite front. On this level, the challenge was to confront an emerging "science gap." The "knowledge race" required a vast outpouring of new funds for scientific research and development and the training of engineers and physical scientists.[18] The profitability of R & D, the rhetoric of the Cold War, and the shift of the international division of labor that jeopardized US hegemony, laid the basis for the emergence of the federal contract university that institutionalized the connection between the growth of higher education, US "national security" and the expertise of a scientific elite. This relation of education to the military-industrial complex, whose emergence was central to this third period of educational reform, also served to lay the groundwork for a new social transformation, the "postindustrial society."[19] An extension of this critical interpretation of school history suggests the emergence of a fourth period in American educational reform geared to the demands of this new postindustrial world.

By the 1960s, the American political economy was entering a new phase that involved a fundamental shift away from industrial production

17. For useful analyses of this period, see David Tyack and Elisabeth Hansot, *Managers of Virtue: Public Schooling Leadership in America, 1820-1980* (New York: Basic Books, 1982), Samuel Haber, *Efficiency and Uplift: Scientific Management in the Progressive Era, 1890-1920* (Chicago: The Unviersity of Chicago Press, 1964), Joel Spring, *Education and the Rise of the Corporate State* (Boston: Beacon, 1972), as well as Bowles and Gintis, *op.cit.* Chapter 7, and Nasaw, *op. cit.*, Chapter 10.

18. On the emergence of "Big Science," see Robert Kargon, "The Future of American Science: An Historical Perspective,"in Mark Kann, ed., *The Future of American Democracy* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983), p. 152.

19. See Chapter 3 of Spring, *op. cit.*, pp. 93-139.

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toward an information-based postindustrial economy.[20] Information itself became the basic commodity of the emerging system. In a postindustrial "information society" most people are divorced from the material economy, including industrial, craft, and agricultural production. The smoke-stack world, in which energy and matter are transformed from one state to another, was exported to Asia, Europe and the better part of the Third World, and replaced with the symbolic manipulation of abstract patterns. While manufacturing continued to play a role, the economy became increasingly organized by computers and other information-processing technologies.[21] Thus, science and technology themselves assume an unprecedented position. Whereas the traditional industrial system appropriated science and technology for its own purposes, they are now becoming the productive system itself. One result is an ever expanding commitment to research and development. Another is that the training of scientists and technicians becomes a top economic priority.

What this *means* is not immediately obvious, and has become one of the most critical issues today.[22] It is clear is, however, that this new social form will demand a basic socio-political restructuring raising significant issues regarding a number of fundamental social values and assumptions concerning democratic participation and political freedoms. At the present time, dominant elites are rallying around a particular programmatic concept of technocratic postindustrial society: one that involves a particular theory of postindustrialism with a specific vision of the future and a set of strategies to bring it about.[23] Originating with such writers as Bell, Brzezinski, Etzioni, Rohatyn and Reich, this technocratic theory has been adopted by both parties, as

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20. See Daniel Bell, *The Coming of Postindustrial Society* (New York: Basic Books, 1973). Also see James R. Beniger, *The Control Revolution: Technological and Economic Origins of The Information Society* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986).

21. For one example of the current debate about the role of manufacturing in a postindustrial society, see Stephen S. Cohen and John Zysman, *Manufacturing Matters: The Myth of the Postindustrial Economy* (New York: Basic Books, 1987).

22. A useful guide to the variety of interpretations of postindustrialism can be found in Victor Ferkiss, "Daniel Bell's Concept of Postindustrial Society: Theory, Myth, and Ideology," *The Political Science Reviewer*, Volume 9 (Fall, 1979), pp. 61-102. Also see Christopher Lasch, "Toward a Theory of Postindustrial Society" in M. Donald Hancock and Godeon Sjoberg, eds., *Politics in the Post-Welfare State* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), pp. 36-50.

23. Benjamin S. Kleinberg, *American Society in the Postindustrial Age: Technology, Power and the End of Ideology* (Columbus: Charles E. Merrill, 1973).

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well as political organizations such as the Trilateral Commission.[24]

One key prerequisite here is the establishment of a more scientifically-managed system of governance,[25] which requires the dismantling of the traditional pluralist system of interest-group politics. The interest groups themselves are the main barriers to achieving this technocratic coordination. According to the technocratic analysis, it is the aggressive competition of self-interested groups for scarce resources that creates a dramatic rise in social entitlements. This results in a "system's overload" that prevents the development of a comprehensive central plan.[26] By deploying centralized administrative mechanisms, technocratic strategies seek to *depoliticize* the interest-group process, thus facilitating the centralization of resources for scientific and technical development, and the contraction of the social and political entitlements held responsible for the crisis.

Also basic to this emerging model is a new set of values. Capitalist values associated with property, wealth and production steadily give way to values based on knowledge, intellect and education. The entrepreneur is displaced by the "professional man," and professionalism itself becomes the central postindustrial ideology.[27] It is thus entirely consistent with this technocratic vision that education takes on a particularly prominent role. The modern university, as the traditional house of science and expertise, is accorded a special status. It becomes a primary "productive agency" for the creation and dissemination of technical ideology. The organization and production of research is thus one of the critical tasks in the new social order. Thus, Bell argues that "in the

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24. Representative texts are Bell, *op. cit.*; Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Between Two Ages: America's Role in the Technotronic Era* (New York: Viking, 1976); Amitai Etzioni, *The Active Society* (New York: The Free Press, 1968); Felix G. Rohatyn, "Restructuring America," *New York Review of Books* (March 5, 1981), p. 16; and "Alternatives to Reaganomics," *The New Times Magazine* (December 5, 1982); and Robert Reich, *The New American Frontier* (New York: Times Books, 1983). For a critical evaluation of "trilateralism," see Holly Sklar, ed., *Trilateralism: The Trilateral Commission and Elite Planning for World Management* (Boston: South End Press, 1980).

25. Jeffrey D. Straussmann, *The Limits of Technocratic Politics* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1978), pp. 41-64; and Frank Fischer, *Technocracy and the Politics of Expertise* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, forthcoming, 1989).

26. See Samuel P. Huntington, "The Democratic Distemper," *The Public Interest,* No. 41 (Fall, 1975), pp. 36-37. This focus on "governance" is examined in Noam Chomsky, "Trilaterialism's RX for Crisis: Governability Yes, Democracy No," *Seven Days* (February 14, 1977). See also David Dickson, "Limiting Democracy: Technocrats and the Liberal State," *Democracy*. Volume I, No. 1 (January, 1981), pp. 61-79.

27. Magali S. Larson, *The Rise of Professionalism* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1977). Also see the chapter titled "The Politics of Professions," in Collins, *The Credential Society*, *op. cit.*

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postindustrial society the chief problem is the organization of science, and the primary institution the university or research institution where such work is carried out."[28] The "organization of science" takes numerous forms. One, of course, is the production of new knowledge. Another is the training and professional certification of experts who will take charge of the postindustrial apparatus. And a third form, largely mediated through professional training, involves bringing new knowledge to bear on the problems of "social guidance."

But as universities have experienced financial constraints and political unrest, they have been called upon less to carry out the applied research function. To avoid these vulnerabilities, research has increasingly shifted to private and non-profit research institutions. Peschek, for example, points out that think-tanks, both liberal and conservative, have become key instruments for the organization of elite agendas.[29] These institutions mobilize opinion and forge policy directives for the modern corporate-state system. It is just such think-tanks, particularly those dealing with educational policy, that are behind many of the current demands for educational reform.

If society is indeed undergoing this kind of fundamental restructuring, a new ideological undergirding is needed. As in the past, educational institutions have been called upon to play a key role in this historically specific re-socialization of students for work and citizenship. In the postindustrial period the task of educational institutions is even larger. Not only do they need to *inculcate* students with new ideologies consistent with the social, economic and cultural demands of technocratic society; they are now involved in the *creation* of the very ideologies.[30]

The university's increasing role here is not just one of disinterested social servant, as postindustrial theorists often imply. Rather, educational institutions themselves must develop and disseminate a new ideology that will legitimate *their own* enhanced power as a result of broad depoliticization and the planned shrinkage of social equality. The

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28. Bell, *op. cit.*

29. Joseph G. Peschek, *Policy Planning Organizations: Elite Agendas and America's Rightward Turn* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987). Brzezinski captures this new role for the university in these words: "The university in an industrial society . . . is an aloof ivory tower, the respository of irrelevant, even if respected wisdom and for a brief time, the fountain-head for budding members of the social elite. In the [new] society, the university becomes an intensely involved 'think tank,' the source of much sustained political planning and social innovation." Brzezinski, *op. cit.*, p.12.

30. Svi Shapiro, "Crisis of Legitimation: Schools, Society, and Declining Faith in Education," in *Interchange,* Vol. 15, No. 4 (Winter, 1984), pp. 26-39.

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response is the development of the "new class" technocratic ideology.

It is particularly important, in this respect, to recognize the *intermediary* role of education commissions. Neither have the commmissions created technocratic ideology, nor have they been staffed by people who lack concern for real problems. Instead, what they have done is to mediate the educational crisis through the conceptual lense of a postindustrial future. Wittingly and unwittingly, the reports analyze the schools from a viewpoint geared more to where they believe society is going — and where many think it should move — than to where the problems are. In this respect, the function of the commissions is to translate the ideological requirements propagated by political and economic elites into educational policy recommendations. Their basic objective has been to shape the way we talk about schools.

At the level of ideology, the notion of "excellence" emerges as an answer to technocracy's legitimation problem. Because of its reliance on technical criteria, technocratic thought lacks a reflexive dimension.[31] It is unable to account for — and thus consensually ground — its own world-view, without an appeal to external normative criteria. As such, "excellence" postulates a vision of "the good" compensating for technocracy's failure to supply a legitimate moral realm.

The technocratic world-view now shapes the language and workings of key social institutions. It deals with thingness, systems, planning and techniques. The call for excellence in a technocratic context is thus an attempt to graft a moral dimension onto an inherently valueless world-view. Overlayed upon an organizational world, excellence loses any substantive or critical referent and is reduced to the level of pure instrumentality.[32] Indeed, it becomes the very symbol of technocratic achievement. Because it offers the lure of quality, excellence helps to deflect the need to create new and meaningful terms of evaluation.[33]

To understand the appearance of "excellence" in the contemporary

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31. See, for example, Manfred Stanley, *The Technocratic Conscience* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978).

32. The instrumentalization of educational thinking is examined by Michael Apple in "Producing Inequality: The Ideology and Economy in the National Reports on Education," *Educational Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (Summer, 1987), pp. 195-200. Apple shows how the reports "shift" the "terrain of the debate from a concern with inequality and democratization . . . to efficiency, standards, and productivity." Also see Maxine Greene's analysis in her essay, "Excellence, Meanings, and Multiplicity," *Teachers College Record*, Volume 86, Number 2 (Winter, 1984), pp. 283-297.

33. We are enticed on all fronts to embrace a world of "excellence": from microwave ovens that provide us with a "galaxy of excellence," to the Philadelphia Orchestra, which invites us to "subscribe to excellence," to self-discovery and personal growth

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discussion of educational reform, it is important to see its connection to "meritocracy." Historically, meritocracy has been the social form of technocracy. It is a system of hierarchy, status, and advancement based on achievement largely technical in nature. What provides meritocracy with its legitimacy is that it is rooted in the same source as technocracy: science and its methodology. In meritocracy, as in science, the validity of claims is determined by objective procedures such as testing, measurements and their pragmatic consequences. Here, knowledge rather than material wealth or traditional authority is the basis for status and power.

Although the ideology of meritocracy has long been basic to corporate capitalism and government bureaucracies, only recently has it become the subject of broad critical debate. Beginning with the social struggles of the 1960s, it has been criticized for both its narrow worldview and its pernicious industrial and military complicities.[34] In addition, the demand of minority groups for social equality took the form of a call for equal access to education — the necessary entrance ticket to jobs and social mobility. These demands directly challenged meritocratic ideology. The call for excellence is designed to relegitimate meritocratic ideology.

Thus the ideology of excellence has become essential to an understanding of how the educational crisis is being interpreted.[35] While several of the reports make an effort to define "excellence," what is

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seminars that offer "blue-prints for excellence," to Indiana University's claim to "embrace excellence" in the classroom as well as on the court. In short, excellence has become the present-day cultural jargon of merit. Isn't excellence "what we do best?" asked President Reagan rhetorically in his recent State of the Union Address. It "makes freedom ring."

34. See Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man* (Boston: Beacon, 1964) especially Chapter 6; K. E. Knorr and 0. Morgenstein, *Science and Defence* (Princeton: Center for International Studies, 1965); David Dickson, *The New Politics of Science* (New York: Pantheon, 1984) especially Chapter 3; and Philip Slater, *The Pursuit of Loneliness: American Culture at the Breaking Point* (Boston: Beacon, 1970), especially Chapter 2.

35. There *is* a significant literature that has pointed to the ideological dimension of the so-called "excellence-movement" in schooling. The essays in Altbach, *Excellence in Education*, *op. cit.*, represent such an effort; as do the analyses of Ann Bastian *et. al.* in *Choosing Equality: The Case for Democratic Schooling* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), Marvin Lazerson *et. al., An Education of Value: The Purposes and Practices of Schools* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), and Michael Apple, *Teachers and Texts: A Political Economy of Class and Gender Relations in Education* (New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987), especially Chapter 6, "Educational Reports and Economic Realities." Even in most of these analyses, however, the notion of "excellence" is never carefully scrutinized, and is often granted the same symbolic and nebulous status it has gained in the reports themselves.

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most striking is its amorphous nature, its emotional weight, and its jargonistic use. Indeed, the call to excellence in schools is really intended to fill a moral void: to teach values, to stimulate a commitment to rigor, and to promote the acceptance of standards. Because laxity, apathy, and the decline of deference have been defined as symptomatic of the contemporary crisis, the call for excellence represents an effort to bolster discipline and inculcate respect for authority.

In curricular terms, the national reports have attempted to infuse excellence in the schools through a rejuvenation of the liberal arts and sciences. Yet, despite lip-service paid to the importance of the liberal arts, the elites' most pressing interest is with science, not the humanities. The reason is clear: science is essential to the postindustrial transformation. It is *the* medium of technocracy. Disproportionate amounts of money, both through legislative appropriations and foundation grants, are being poured into the universities for the revitalization of scientific infrastructure (laboratories, computer systems, research centers and university industrial parks) and the improvement of scientific education (both training and equipment).[36]

The call for excellence in the educational curriculum is, in reality, increasingly preoccupied with "technological literacy." Although technological literacy is sold in the name of scientific education, its real function is to bolster the *authority* of science in order to counter the disruptive impact of anti-technocratic criticism. Consider, for example, a report on science education by the National Science Foundation and the US Department of Education commissioned by the Carter administration in 1980.[37] Concerned that schools are no longer imbuing their students with a positive attitude toward science, the report calls upon teachers and administrators to develop new strategies to provide a more positive climate for science, both its methods and content.

What is significant here is not only the fear of a shortage of future scientists and technical workers, but the legitimacy of the very *culture* of

36. Many authors have examined this role of the university. See Dennis Muniak, "The Implications of University High-Technology Research Parks and Centers for Urban Development and State Policy Coordination" (Unpublished paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the New York State Political Science Association, Albany, April 4-5, 1986); Martin Kenney, *Bio-Technology: The University-Industrial Connection* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986); a number of essays in Schoolman and Magad, *op. cit.,* especially those by John Kalas, and Black and Worthington; and Bjorn Wittrock and Aant Elzinga's ed., *The University Research System* (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell International, 1985).

37. National Science Foundation and the US Department of Education, "Science and Engineering Education for the 80s and Beyond" (Washington: US Government Printing Office, October, 1980).

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science itself. Widespread belief in this culture is essential to the technocratic project; technological illiteracy threatens its realization. Such illiteracy, the report claims, leaves students unable to participate in the ostensibly scientific/neutral domain of technology in which political decisions are increasingly framed.

The argument rests on a key political assumption: that the goal of technological literacy is to revitalize participation in order to make democracy viable in a high-tech society. This implies that people must have enough scientific competence to judge — if not actually make — decisions of a technological nature. In fact, this is the most fundamental question confronting the future of democracy in a postindustrial society. For the technocrats, however, the question has already been answered. Skeptical about both the possibility *and* advisability of widespread public participation, they ultimately advocate *limiting* citizen involvement.

Ironically, then, technological literacy can serve to depoliticize decision-making processes.[38] This contradiction between the goals of technological literacy and the technocratic world-view is subtle. With the exception of Dickson, it has been almost entirely overlooked.[39] The primary goal of technological literacy may be to teach enough knowledge of science and technology so that students come to respect its institutions and culture, but not enough to question its general premises or specific findings. The purpose is not to develop skills that enable citizens to critically evaluate and participate in technically-based decisions, but rather to legitimate the culture of science (or "science as culture" as Donald Kennedy, the president of Stanford University, strikingly put it). In short, technical elites have recognized the importance of engendering acceptance of scientific conclusions as fundamental to the technocratic program.

Finally, there is the issue of the relation between excellence and motivation. By calling for excellence as the way to social amelioration, commission reports, politicians, labor leaders, educators and corporate executives seek to help re-motivate individuals to play their required roles

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38. Michael Black and Richard Worthington describe this role of science — this "scientization by an elite" — in a particularly useful way: "Instead of clarifying policy objectives, science becomes a technocratic instrument which mystifies the public by creating a language package inaccessible to journalist and citizen alike. The result is frustrated intervention by outsiders in the actual policy process coupled with a real fall in democratic, participatory practice." Black and Worthington, *op. cit.,* pp. 277-78.

39. David Dickson, *The New Politics of Science*, *op. cit.,* p. 312. Also see Morris Shamos, "The Lesson Every Child Need Not Learn: Scientific Literacy for All is an Empty Goal," *The Sciences* (July/August, 1988), pp. 14-20; and Fred Hechinger, "About Education," *New York Times* (August 3, 1988), p. B7.

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in the "new" society. That is, the crisis not only concerns the lack of shared values, but also personal motivation. Because excellence is associated with the nature of the self, it implies personal accomplishments and individual responsibility. But by framing the *ideologies* of excellence within technocratic assumptions, these qualities are distorted by the demands of specific legitimation and motivation crises. To idealize "excellence" and bemoan "mediocrity" in work, school and political performance is to blame individuals for the failures of institutions, and to attempt to persuade individuals to be more "productive" and "responsible." Current calls to excellence are thus typically calls to motivation. But in focusing on the self, such incantations purposefully conflate self and institution, person and performance, individual and society in such a way as to systematically blur the differences between individual responsibilities and structural requirements. As a motivational tool, the excellence strategy attempts to revive the competition of the market place by relocating it in the bureaucratic work place. While this strategy plays an important role in further weakening the self, it also serves to strengthen the ethic of meritocracy. To be judged less-than-excellent is to be relegated to a lower rung and to suffer the long acknowledged "hidden injuries" of failure.[40] Not only does this systematic effort to employ rigorous standards make this failure more objective, it engenders passivity in the face of authority and legitimates an elitism essential to the new technocratic project.

Calls to excellence are designed to legitimate the expansion of technocratic strategies now being advanced by dominant elites. Whether in the managerial world or in the school system, excellence has been marshalled as an ideological response to impending socio-economic crisis and its political implications. Specifically, this ideology is part of a broader agenda aimed at the restructuring of social divisions through the relegitimation of meritocratic principles. What this involves is an effort to use the schools for instrumental as well as for educational purposes. To focus so much attention on American schools is to do much more tham bemoan a "rising tide of mediocrity." It is an effort to institutionalize the vision of political and technocratic elites, who once again have singled out a social institution easily blamed and vulnerable to the vicissitudes of ideological manipulation.

Obviously, the technocratic system and its "new class" elites have not spontaneously emerged in full form. A project of such scale and

40. Richard Sennett and Jonathan Cobb, *The Hidden Injuries of Class* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972).

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import must work its way through an entire culture, molding values, relations to authority, technologies, and status structures to its requirements. To argue that the technocratic interpretation of postindustrialism has gained significant presence through the ideologies of excellence in this fourth period of educational reform is not to overlook the fact that technocratic restructuring will confront a multiplicity of obstacles to its full realization. Nor is it to deny that new ideologies will emerge to replace "excellence" after its influence has been played out. It is nonetheless essential to underscore the deep-seated diffusion of this phenomenon throughout institutions of American society, and to call attention to a need to trace the ways in which technocratic attitudes and techniques will be institutionalized. In the final analysis, both educational reform and meaningful social critique demand further search to uncover the underlying social and economic dynamics of the post-industrial era.

PRAXIS INTERNATIONAL

Edited by Seyla Benhabib and Svetozar Stojanović

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The Dreams of Deep Ecology

Tim Luke

"Deep ecology" principles are more than a new philosophy of nature. Deep ecologists have provided the basic inspiration for numerous bioregional, national and even transnational political action groups.[1] Local "place defense" organizations across America, Western Europe and Japan, like oppositions to new hydroelectric dams, powerlines, airports, highways, timbering programs, dredging and draining schemes or power plants, draw from deep ecological ideas.[2] On a regional level, ecological resistance to new nuclear weaponry systems, nuclear power stations, military bases or communications networks have often drawn guidance from deep ecology. Many radical activists, like the "eco-raiders" or "monkey-wrenchers" of the American Southwest and Pacific Northwest, also have deep ecological sympathies. Other activist groups, including Earth First!, Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, the Sea Sheperds and the various Green political parties share close affinities with deep ecology.[3] In other words, deep ecology has cast itself as one of the primary theoretical forces behind many popular social movements' efforts to defend the quality of everyday life from further rationalization by the state and transnational

1. George Sessions, "The Deep Ecology Movement," *Environmental Review* VII (1987), pp. 105-126.

2. Bill Devall, "Ecological Consciousness and Ecological Resisting: Guidelines for Comprehension and Research," *Humboldt Journal of Social Relations*, 9 (1979), pp. 177-196.

3. See Fritjof Capra and Charlene Spretnak, *Green Politics* (New York: Dutton, 1985); David Foreman, ed. *Ecodefense: A Field Guide to Monkey Wrenching* (Tucson: Earth First! Books, 1985); and Jonathan Porritt, *Seeing Green: The Politics of Ecology Explained* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985).

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commerce.[4] As such, it deserves careful but critical consideration.

The deep ecology movement emerged in the 1970s in reaction to the reform environmentalism of the 1960s, which had developed, in turn, as a response to the unfettered exploitation of Nature during the global economic boom of the 1950s and 1960s. Yet, in seeking to improve on reform environmentalism, the deep ecologists have taken a number of problematic political positions. The most prominent exponents of deep ecology are Naess, Devall, Sessions and Snyder.

One can sympathize with certain aspects of the deep ecology project. Most importantly, it could constitute *in nuce* new other-regarding norms of justice. By seeing Nature as a significant form of otherness with properties of sentient subjectivity, deep ecology proposes that we adopt new codes of ethical responsibility to move away from the exploitation of Nature. However, its practitioners often weaken and marginalize their appeal by adopting ancillary positions that are poorly thought out, ineffectively argued, or politically naive. As a result, the dreams of deep ecology often take on nightmarish qualities.

State, Society and the Environment

Modern industrial production, as Schumpeter claims, presupposes "creative destruction." Vast waste is a primary product of both modern capitalism and socialism. In the US, this wasteful destruction has sparked at least three major social conservation movements during the 20th century. The first two took hold within the federal bureaucracy during the Progressive Era and New Deal period under Theodore and Franklin D. Roosevelt.[5] Both of these movements, however, aimed only at conservation. Their agenda was to impose limits on the most destructive abuses of land, timber, water and mineral resources in the private sector by charging federal agencies with their scientific management. Economic growth was not proscribed, it was simply rationalized.

Environmental conditions, however, worsened during the "long prosperity" following WWII. Commoner observes that, "most pollution problems made their first appearance, or became very much worse,

4. See Bill Devall and George Sessions, *Deep Ecology* (Layton, UT: Peregrine Smith Books, 1985); Bill Devall, "The Development of Natural Resources and the Integrity of Nature," *Environmental Ethics*, 6 (1984), pp. 293-323; Bill Devall, "The Deep Ecology Movement," *Natural Resources Journal*, 20 (1980), pp. 295-322; Kirkpatrick Sale, *Dwellers in the Land: The Bioregional Vision* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1985); and Michael Tobias, ed. *Deep Ecology* (San Diego: Avant Books, 1985).

5. See Donald Worster, *Nature's Economy: The Roots of Ecology* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1977).

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in the years following WWII, having made their environmental debut in the war years: smog (first noticed in Los Angeles in 1943), manmade radioactive elements (first produced in the the wartime atomic bomb project), DDT (widely used for the first time in 1944), detergents (which began to displace soap in 1946), synthetic plastics (which became a contributor to the rubbish problem only after the war)."[6] In the US, these problems sparked critical attention and, then, government action in the 1960s on Kennedy's "New Frontier" in a third national conservation movement, beginning with Carson's and Udall's work.[7]

Yet, as Sessions claims, the more urgent crises of the 1960s split critical thinking about the environment as well as political strategies for its protection. "Something happened, however, in the mid-1960s which one author describes as a movement 'from conservation to ecology.' There was a rapidly emerging awareness that increased population, pollution, resource depletion, nuclear radiation, pesticide and chemical poisoning, the deterioration of the cities, the disappearance of wildlife and wilderness, decreases in the 'quality of life,' and continued economic growth and development under the rhetoric of 'progress' were biologically interrelated. There was a growing suspicion of the ability of technologists to manage natural systems successfully."[8] As a result, a state-sanctioned reform environmentalism developed out of this new conservation movement, while more radical ecological groups reacted both against its moderation and the growing severity of the environmental crisis.

Reform environmentalism movements, according to deep ecology, focus on the *unintended social costs* of economic growth, complexity, scale and productivity. Most reform environmentalists still treat them as minor problems that can be managed from the public and not-for-profit sectors with technocratically-planned changes in government regulation or market-driven incentives in the private sector.[9] Business and

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6. Barry Commoner, *The Closing Circle: Man, Nature and Technology* (New York: Bantam Books, 1971), pp. 124-125.

7. Carson's severe criticism of modern pesticides called for greater attention to be given to "ecological" networks, or "the complex, precise, and highly intergrated system of relationships between living things which cannot be safely ignored," *Silent Spring* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1962), p. 218. Also see Stewart Udall, *The Quiet Crisis* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963).

8. George Sessions, "Shallow and Deep Ecology: A Revlew of the Philosophical Literature," *Ecological Consciousness: Essays From the Earthday X Colloquium* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1981), p. 392.

9. See Commoner, *The Closing Circle op. cit.*; Bill Devall, "Reformist Environmentalism," *Humboldt Journal of Social Relations* 6 (1979), pp. 129-155; and John Dryzek, *Rational Ecology: Environment and Political Economy* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987).

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government always have known about these costs, but they purposely suppress efforts to fully contain or eradicate them. Deep ecologists argue that an industrial economy inherently presumes the imposition of such costs as externalities, and regulating them only postpones the final collapse or shifts the costs elsewhere. Hence, a radical change is necessary to attack the more basic problems — untrammeled economic growth, instrumental rationality, and the reification of Nature implicit in capitalist and socialist industrialism. As their solution, deep ecologists want to resurrect the alternative, repressed, ignored or forgotten visions of ecological living behind or beyond the structures of industrial society.

Deep Ecology: Origins and Outlines

Most deep ecologists argue that their principles are nothing new. They see themselves borrowing the "ancient truths" of pre-industrial, non-urban, and pre-capitalist societies. Because such societies either have been destroyed or marginalized within the current world-system, however, deep ecologists identify these basic beliefs as "the minority tradition." Devall and Sessions claim that "the minority tradition focuses on personal growth within a small community and selects a path to cultivating ecological consciousness while protecting the ecological integrity of the place."[10] As examples of such thinking, Sessions tags a panoply of traditions from around the world as inspirations for deep ecology: Christian Franciscanism, Heideggerian philosophy, Aldo Leopold's ecosystem ethics, Taoism, Buddhism, hunter-gatherer tribal religions, Western process metaphysics (Heraclitus, Whitehead, and Spinoza), American Indian culture, European romanticism (Goethe, Rousseau, Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley), American transcendentalism (Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman, Muir), "beat philosophy" (Ginsberg and Synder), 1960s counter-culture (Watts, Reich, Roszak), social ecology (Bookchin), and eco-resistance (Rodman, Berg, Dasmann, and Abbey).[11] In one way or another, each of these cultural pieces are placed into the deep ecology conceptual mosaic.

The idea of deep ecology was first outlined in 1972, and in 1973 Naess articulated his distinction between "shallow environmentalism" and "deep ecology."[12] Naess claims the conservation movements of the Progressive and New Deal eras, environmental pressure groups, the Club of Rome "limits to growth" school, and animal rights activists all

10. Devall and Sessions, *Deep Ecology*, *op. cit.*, p. 3.
11. Sessions, "Shallow and Deep Ecology," *op. cit.*

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fail to challenge the existing institutionalized worldview of advanced industrial society. Instead, such "shallow" ecologies are seen as adhering to an "anthropocentric" view of Nature. This view separates humanity from Nature and deadens it by seeing Nature as inanimate, while empowering humans to dominate it because they are defined as the crown of creation. Working with such values, shallow environmentalism is merely a kind of "enlightened despotism." It would ease, but not end, the ravages of human domination of Nature by eliminating its worst waste, regulating inefficiencies or acting more humanely.

Naess' latter notion of a "deep ecology" accepts shallow environmentalism's intentions, but it pushes beyond this limited approach into a totalistic critique of modern industrialism. He stresses a post-anthropocentric "biospherical egalitarianism" to create "an awareness of the equal right (of all things) *to live and blossom*."[13] By calling for the return of people to Nature, Naess claims a normative role for deep ecologists in working out a "New Philosophy of Nature." Accordingly, ". . . the significant tenets of the Deep Ecology movement are clearly and forcefully *normative*. They express a value priority system only in part based on results of scientific research . . . in so far as ecology movements deserve our attention, they are *ecophilosophical* rather than ecological. Ecology is a *limited* science which makes *use* of scientific methods. Philosophy is the most general forum of debate on fundamentals, descriptive as well as prescriptive, and political philosophy is one of its subsections. By an *ecosophy* I mean a philosophy of ecological harmony or equilibrium. A philosophy is a kind of *sofia* wisdom, is openly normative, it contains both norms, rules, announcements and hypothesis concerning the state of affairs in our universe. Wisdom is policy wisdom, prescription, not only scientific description and prediction." Rather than accepting shallow environmentalism to preserve the dominant worldview, Naess envisions deep ecologists developing his ecosophical system as a new mediation of humanity and society with Nature. Devall and Session's *Deep Ecology* elaborates the conceptual underpinnings of deep ecology in much more detail. Following Naess, they see today's basic conflict as one of consciousness: "Thus deep ecology goes beyond the so called factual level to the level of self and earth wisdom. Deep ecology goes beyond a limited piecemeal shallow approach to environmental problems and attempts to articulate a comprehensive religious and philosophical

12. Arne Naess, "The Shallow and Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement: A Summary," *Inquiry*, 16 (1973), pp. 95-100.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 100.

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worldview. The foundations of deep ecology are the basic intuitions and experiencing of ourselves and Nature which comprise ecological consciousness."[14]

The central problem of the dominant worldview for Devall and Sessions is the human desire to dominate Nature or the anthropocentric fallacy of man's separation from and control over Nature: "Ecological consciousness and deep ecology are in sharp contrast with the dominant worldview of technocratic-industrial societies with regard to humans as isolated and fundamentally separate from the rest of Nature, as superior to, and in charge of, the rest of creation. But the view of humans as separate and superior to the rest of Nature is only part of larger cultural patterns. For thousands of years, Western culture has become increasingly obsessed with the idea of dominance: with dominance of humans over nonhuman Nature, masculine over the feminine, wealthy and powerful over the poor, with the dominance of West over non-Western cultures. Deep ecological consciousness allows us to see through these erroneous and dangerous illusions.[15] To acquire this non-dominating mode of ecological consciousness, Devall and Sessions adopt Naess' two ultimate norms: self-realization and biocentric equality.

First, self-realization is framed by Synder's vision of "real work" (1974), which stresses becoming a "whole person" rather than remaining an isolated ego struggling to accumulate material possessions.[16] It is a new ethic of "being" or "doing" rather than a credo of "experiencing" or "having." Self-realization is defined as spiritual growth, or the unfolding of inner essence, which, ". . . begins when we cease to understand or see ourselves as isolated and narrow competing egos and begin to identify with other humans from our family and friends to, eventually, our species. But the deep ecology sense of self requires a further maturity and growth, an identification which goes beyond humanity to include the nonhuman world. We must see beyond our narrow contemporary cultural assumptions and values, and the conventional wisdom of our time and place, and this is best achieved by the mediative deep questioning process. Only in this way can we hope to attain full mature personhood and uniqueness."[17] Second, the norm of biocentrism maintains "that all things have an equal right to live and blossom and to reach their own individual forms of unfolding and self-realization within the larger self-realization." This principle does not necessarily preclude

14. Devall and Sessions, *Deep Ecology*, *op. cit.*, p. 65.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 65-66.
16. Gary Snyder, *Turtle Island* (New York: New Directions, 1974).

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mutual predation; instead, it stresses the larger concern of living "with minimal rather than maximal impact on other species and the earth in general."[18] Consequently, they argue that, " . . . biocentric equality is intimately related to the all-inclusive Self-realization in the sense that if we harm the rest of Nature then we are harming ourselves. There are no boundaries and everything is interrelated. But insofar as we perceive things as individual organisms or entities, the insight draws us to respect all human and non-human individuals in their own right as parts of the whole without feeling the need to set up hierarchies of species with humans at the top." This awareness could then move people to change in accord with principles like "voluntary simplicity," or living life as "simple in means, rich in ends."

After defining "ecosophy" during the 1970s by its opposition both to advanced industrialism and the co-opted thinking of shallow environmentalism, in 1984 Naess and Sessions developed eight essential principles for deep ecology: 1) the well-being of human and non-human life on earth has intrinsic values, separate from human uses or purposes; 2) the diverse, richness of all life forms contributes to realizing these intrinsic values; 3) humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity of life except to satisfy vital needs; 4) the flourishing of human life and culture is compatible with a substantial decrease in human populations; indeed, the flourishing of nonhuman life requires such a decrease; 5) human interference with the nonhuman world is excessive and worsening; 6) policies must be changed to transform economic, ideological and technological structures into a situation much different from the present; 7) human satisfaction must shift to appreciating the quality of life (dwelling in situations of inherent value) rather than adhering to higher material standards of living; and, 8) those who subscribe to these points have an obligation, directly or indirectly, to try to implement the necessary changes.[19]

Conceptual Contradictions in Deep Ecology

Where have the deep ecologists dug their intellectual foundations? In citing "the minority tradition" as their basic inspiration, deep ecologists have combed selectively through the cultural traditions of pre-capitalist, non-urban, pre-industrial primal peoples, seeking "a basis for philosophy, religion, cosmology, and conservation practices

17. Devall and Sessions, *Deep Ecology*, *op. cit.*, p. 67.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 68.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 70.

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that can be applied to our own society."[20] By taking this line, deep ecology seems to stand firmly on one essential point, namely, as a systematic negation of the "Enlightenment schema."

As Horkheimer and Adorno wrote, "the program of the enlightenment was the disenchantment of the world; the dissolution of myths and the substitution of knowledge for fancy."[21] The essence of this new knowledge is instrumental reason *qua* technology, "It does not work by concepts and images, by the fortunate insight, but refers to method, the exploitation of others' work and capital . . . What men want to learn from Nature is how to use it in order wholly to dominate it and other men. That is the only aim . . . for the enlightenment, whatever does not conform to the rule of computation and utility is suspect . . . Enlightenment is totalitarian."[22] Horkheimer and Adorno detail how the Enlightenment systematically extirpated animism and mythological thinking to disenchant Nature. If any mode of thought failed to attain closure with these rational assumptions and judgments, then enlightened consciousness reduced it to mere fictions. "Enlightenment has always taken the basic principle of myth to be anthropomorphism, the projection onto Nature of the subjective. . . . It makes the dissimilar comparable by reducing it to abstract quantities. To the enlightenment, that which does not reduce to numbers, and ultimately to the one, becomes illusion; modern positivism writes it off as literature. . .The destruction of gods and qualities alike is insisted upon. . . . myth turns into enlightenment, and nature into mere objectivity. Men pay for the increases of their power with alienation from that over which they exercise their power. Enlightenment behaves toward things as a dictator toward men."[23] Deep ecologists want to overthrow this dictatorship of Enlightenment, returning human consciousness back to a re-enchanted world, an animate resubjectified Nature, and more mythic modes of knowing to overcome man's alienation from and domination of Nature.

This anti-Enlightenment stance is plain in Naess' principles of self-realization and biocentric equality. Devall and Sessions deny enlightened instrumental reasoning any jurisdiction over these basic precepts: "they are arrived at by the deep questioning process and reveal the importance of moving to the philosophical and religious level of wisdom.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 96.
21. Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (New York: Seabury, 1972), p. 3.
22. *Ibid.*, pp. 4-6.
23. *Ibid.*, pp. 6-9.

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They cannot be validated, of course, by the methodology of modern science based on its usual mechanistic assumptions and its very narrow definition of data."[24] Deep ecology, as Tobias suggests, concerns "personal moods, values, aesthetic and philosophical convictions which serve no necessarily utilitarian, nor rational end. By definition their sole justification rests upon the goodness, balance, truth and beauty of the natural world, and of a human being's biological and psychological need to be fully intergrated into it."[25] Given this disposition, deep ecology also draws from the beliefs of primal traditions. "The natural and supernatural worlds are inseparable; each is intrinsically a part of the other. Humans and natural entities are in constant spiritual interchange and reciprocity," because Devall and Sessions interpret anthropological evidence as indicating that "the primal mind holds the totality of human-centered artifacts, such as language, social organization, norms, shared meanings, and magic, within the first world of Nature. For the primal mind there is no sharp break between humans and the rest of Nature."[26]

Deep ecological self-realization is to be the antithesis of consumerism in which the isolated ego strives for hedonistic pleasures or personal salvation in consuming. Instead, it projects autonomous subjectivity on to Nature and seeks a fusion of the personal self with the "organic wholeness" of Nature's Self.[27] Both people and Nature are defined as enchanted fields of conscious being, interlocked by natural necessity and human mythic understanding. This "full unfolding of the self can also be summarized by the phrase 'no one is saved until we are all saved,' where the phrase 'one' includes not only me, an individual human, but all humans, whales, grizzly bears, whole rain forest ecosystems, mountains and rivers, the tiniest microbes in the soil, and so on."[28]

In this liberation of Nature, everything is to be treated as an animate subject with intrinsic value and inherent rights for self-realization: "the intuition of biocentric equality is that all things in the biosphere have an equal right to live and blossom and to reach their individual forms of unfolding and self-realization with the larger self-realization. The basic intuition is that all entities in the ecosphere, as parts of an interrelated whole, are equal in intrinsic worth."[29] Deep ecologists embrace

24. Devall and Sessions, *Deep Ecology*, *op. cit.*, p. 66.
25. *Ibid.*, p. v.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 97.
27. Arne Naess, "Identification as a Source of Deep Ecology Attitudes," *Deep Ecology*, ed. Michael Tobias, *op. cit.*, pp. 256-270.
28. Devall and Sessions, *Deep Ecology*, *op. cit.*, p. 67.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 67.

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this principle to affirm that people are Nature, and Nature is, at least in part, people. To harm Nature, then, is to commit slow suicide or engage in self-mutilation. When humans technologically intervene in Nature, it often means that we abuse or murder other animate selves from river systems to animals to rain forests. Still, natural subjects are empowered under this rule in Naess' system to use each other as food, shelter or security, because "mutual predation is a biological fact of life." However, given humanity's tremendous destructive powers in Enlightenment-based technology, people must treat Nature and other natural subjects as ends not means, living "with minimum rather than maximum impact on other species and on the earth in general." As modes of mythic construction for a reenchanted world, these animistic apperceptions of subjectivity in Nature, Devall and Sessions conclude, "cannot be grasped intellectually but are ultimately experiental."

Some aspects of these arguments are attractive. Like many others, deep ecologists want to treat other forms of natural life and non-life with a good conscience and an ethic of moral responsibility. In this sense, it potentially offers the beginnings for a new system of morality, stressing an ethic of minimal impact, rather than maximum exploitation, for living within Nature. Deep ecology also presents some initial rules for enacting and legitimating this nature-consciousness as a mode of human good conscience. Nonetheless, beyond these promising ideas, one must ask what kind of "new morality" would rise from mythic knowledge, an animate conception of Nature, and anti-Enlightenment mode of reasoning? When looking at these issues, deep ecology's challenge to the Enlightenment schema seems deeply flawed.

A Myth of Humanity's Fall: The "Retro" Rationality of Primalism

The quest for self-realization and biocentric equality as the foundations of this new ecosophy implicitly assumes its own myth of man's fall. Once upon a time, or elsewhere in more primitive regions of the world, humanity lived in a state of innocence. But now, due to technological domination, humanity lives in a state of corruption or alienation. For deep ecology, however, redemption is possible, in accord with the examples set by primal societies, by attaining correct moral consciousness. Consequently, the idea of "primal peoples," which is as questionable as "world communism" or "the Third World," serves as a reified symbol of virtuous praxis and a "retro" rationality for social organization.

Deep ecologists lump the many primitive cultures into one "primal" cultural pile, and then privilege these values and practices

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unquestioningly in their ecosophical thought. To stave off ecological crisis in post-industrial society, deep ecologists recommend that individuals appropriate the selectively-perceived norms of preliterate/pre-industrial peoples into their everyday activity. Supposedly, "primal peoples are characterized by individuation, personalism, nominalism, and existentialism," whereas the pathology of advanced industrialism "consists in our dedication to abstractions, to our collectivism, pseudo-individualism, and lack of institutional means for the expression and transcendence of human ambivalence."[30] Such retro generalizations are totally suspect. The warring, slavery, tribalism, sexism, or racism practiced in primitive societies is simply denied by virtuous definition. Devall and Sessions, for example, continually stress the wisdom of American Indians, but this approval reduces a wide range of different cultures to a privileged, reified symbol that virtually denies contradiction. Their vision of "primal virtue" keys off images of the silent brave, who sheds a tear over the white man's garbage, in anti-littering ad spots. It is nothing but a romanticized mystification, as Deloria suggests, "reciting a past that is basically mythological, thrilling and comforting,"[31] because it casts a pre-Columbian America as peopled by noble savages. Unlike us, they "give a hoot and don't pollute." Moreover, the myths are tremendously unclear about which "Indians" are the most virtuous. Are we to emulate "the old ways" of tribes like the Aztecs, Incas and Mayans or the Mohaves, Supai and Cocopahs? Have any Native American societies systematically practiced slavery, war-making or ecological destruction? Thus, native American groups today, for example, hunt "endangered species" of animals merely to procure religious totems vital to their religious practices. Likewise, modern Navajos and Apaches are very active promoters of stripmining, power station construction, aggressive timbering, and industrial tourism on their lands in the Southwest. Did any agricultural groups in the pre-Columbian American Southwest or Meso-America promote ecological disasters by destroying their lands through overcultivation or overirrigation, somewhat like corporate agriculturalists today? In other words, why define all Indian societies as truly "primal" or equally peaceful, nature-regarding, and respectful of the individual?[32]

By the same token, in the larger picture of all primitive societies, do

30. *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21.
31. Vine Deloria, Jr., *God is Red* (New York: Dell, 1973), p. 56.
32. See William Cronen, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983); and Peter Farb, *Man's Rise to Civilization as Shown by the Indians of North America from Primeval Times to the Coming of the Industrial State* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1968).

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all primal cultures share these nature-regarding norms as ethical universals? Could primal peoples develop anti-ecological values? Have primal peoples created ecological crises or abused the environment with their technologies? Does this moral alternative really exist or is it a psychosocial projection discovered in post-industrial social scientists' dissatisfaction with advanced industrialism as they systematize their one-sided understanding of primal people?

When deep ecologists claim that primal peoples unfailingly used Nature reverently so that a "richness of ends was achieved with material technology that was elegant, sophisticated, appropriate, and controlled within the contest of a traditional society,"[33] red flags must be raised. Such values may have been true of small nomadic bands of hunters-and-gatherers or slash-and-burn agriculturalists. Can the same rules, however, be followed today by ecologizing post-industrial peoples reinhabiting nature? Devall and Sessions deny they are resurrecting the myth of noble savages; still, their search for inspiration from primal traditions verges upon becoming such a covering myth. Deep ecology stresses its anti-modern disposition by calling for a reinhabitation of varying bio-regions in the future along the primitive lines of primal societies. The myth of man's fall from primitive grace is false, but it justifies mythologically deep ecology's anti-modern, future primitive vision of social change.

The Dialectic of Reenchantment

In advocating a reenchantment of the world, deep ecology's privileging of primal traditions ignores the extent to which primal society's myth, magic and ritual are partially the functional equivalents (and perhaps the conceptual antecedents) of Enlightenment science and technology. Ritual and myth may be the "nondominating science" that Naess, Devall and Sessions support; yet, as Horkheimer and Adorno argue, these modes of knowing can anticipate scientific domination. In mythic reasoning, ". . . everything unknown and alien is primary and undifferentiated: that which transcends the confines of experience; whatever in things is more than their previously known reality . . . The dualization of Nature as appearance and sequence, effort and power, which first makes possible both myth and science, originates in human fear, the expression of which becomes explanation . . . The separation of the animate and the inanimate the occupation of certain places by demons and deities, first arises from this pre-animism, which contains the first lines of

33. Devall and Sessions, *Deep Ecology*, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

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the separation of the subject and object."[34] In some respects, then, primal myths and rituals actually are an operationalist mode of thinking, mediating primal people's efforts to control or influence Nature.[35]

"Myth intended report, naming, the narration of the beginning," as Horkheimer and Adorno admit, "but also presentation, confirmation, explanation. . . . every ritual includes the idea of activity as a determined process which magic can nevertheless influence. . . . the myths . . . are already characterized by the discipline and power that Bacon celebrated as the 'right mark'."[36] Magic is based on the specific not the universal, concrete representation not substitutional abstractions, and impersonations of demonic or divine spirits not methodical operational manipulations of matter. It can contain its own dialectic of enlightenment. Mythological ritual sets off the process of enlightenment until enlightenment itself becomes an animistic magic. "Just as myths already realize enlightenment, so enlightenment with every step becomes more deeply engulfed in mythology."[37]

Devall and Sessions endorsement of the "new physics" of holistic interrelation reflects this confusion.[38] Enlightenment science cannot be disinvented or destroyed. It is fully embedded in many of our existing acts and artifacts. Sensuous, participative, metaphysical views of reality — when fused into technical potentials of modern science for destructive misapplication — could promote a more domineering rather than less destructive science. There are no guarantees. New Age thinkers already treat ecological reasoning as a model of automatic cybernetic management intrinsic to Nature (the "Spaceship Earth" metaphor) that scientists can modify to realize greater micro/macro efficiencies in global production, like weather modification, ocean farming or genetic engineering.[39] Like Stewart Brand, deep ecology can too easily slip into "Whole Earth Catalogism," fusing the quest for more wood stoves, tepees and windmills with lobbying for interplanetary colonization, space stations and hypercomputerization.

Deep ecologists forget how much of modern Newtonian-Cartesian-

34. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, *op. cit.*, p. 15.
35. See Bronislaw Malinowsky, *Magic, Science and Religion* (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1955), pp. 79-87.
36. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, *op. cit.*, p. 8.
37. *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.
38. See Morris Berman, *The Reenchantment of the World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981); and, Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics* (Boulder: Shambhala Press, 1975).
39. See Marilyn Ferguson, *The Aquarian Conspiracy* (New York: St. Martin's, 1980); and, R. Buckminister Fuller, *Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth* (New York: Dutton, 1971).

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Galilean-Baconian science was itself wrapped up in morally-enchanted mystical visions of Nature.[40] Newtonian mechanics was created not only to make possible new technical engineering feats of Nature's subjugation, but also to attain some new moral understanding from the universe and its celestial spheres. The unintended consequences of reenchantment and myth may express the operational wish for new instrumental control as much as primal man's co-participation in the natural and supernatural worlds. In modern times, this confusing conflation of enchanted mythic ritual and instrumentally rational science best reveals its stark contradictions in Nazi Germany.[41] A reenchantment of Nature in Nordic myth and new Aryan ritual produced V-2s, Auschwitz, ME-262s, and nuclear fission, while covering itself in fables of Teutonic warriors true to tribal *Blut und Boden*. Ideologists of industrial fascism openly proclaimed it to be *anti-modern* and *future primitive*. Nazism also condemned industrialism and the overpopulation of most other societies as it propounded a very peculiar vision of reinhabiting its self-proclaimed and historically denied *Lebensraum*. One should not assume that deep ecology will lead necessarily to a fascist outcome; yet, the deep ecologists must demonstrate why their philosophy would not conclude in a similarly deformed fusion of modernity with premodernity.

In addition, deep ecology's evocation of "Eastern spiritual process traditions," namely, Taoism and Buddhism, is lifted out of its cultural context with little consideration of any socio-cultural grounding. On one level, these religions may enable one "to relate to the process becoming more mature, of awakening from illusion and delusion: and help "groups of people engaged in the 'real work' of cultivating their own ecological consciousness."[42] Yet, on another level, these traditions embrace myths of "organic unity" and, as the Tao bids, quest for "production without possession, action without self-assertion, development without domination,"[43] that gives away their origins in traditional bureaucratic empires prior to or outside of the modern world-system.

In peasant villages bound by kinship-driven collectivism, limited agricultural productivity, and imperial bureaucratic oversight, as Weber notes, these religions served as a salvation-ethic based on attaining perfect changelessness. For such an "Eastern spiritual process tradition,"

40. See Timothy J. Reiss, *The Discourse of Modernism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982); and, William Leiss, *The Domination of Nature* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1974).

41. See Robert A. Pois, *National Socialism and the Religion of Nature* (New York: St. Martin's 1986).

42. Devall and Sessions, *Deep Ecology*, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

43. Sessions, "Shallow and Deep Ecology," *op. cit.*, p. 412.

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"when such salvation is gained, the deep joy and tender, undifferentiated love characterizing such illumination provides the highest blessing possible in this existence, short of absorption into the eternal dreamless sleep of *Nirvana*, the only state in which no change occurs," which comes, in turn, by freeing oneself "from all personal ties to family and world, pursuing the goal of mystical illumination by fulfilling the injunctions relating to the correct path *(dharma)*."[44] In Weber's view, these ethics led down a path of world rejection by directing their followers to avoid individual self-realization. On the wheel of *karma* causality, each new incarnation of an individual creates or denies new chances for *Nirvana* attainment in the future. Any attempt at rational purposive activity in the methodical control of life leads away from salvation. Similarly, full individual self-realization in existential individuation would seem to make *Nirvana* more remote by ensnaring the individual in the illusory (even if they are ecologically grounded) concerns of this changing, suffering world.

Such ethical codes, if closely adhered to, are essentially ill-suited to a purposive cultural revival of ecological consciousness to revolutionize advanced industrialism. They have been credos of world-rejection and individual-effacement (as might suit the spiritual needs of overburdened agricultural producers under oriental despotism) rather than a continuation of the individuation, personalism, nominalism and existentialism Devall and Sessions endorse in primal cultures. To evoke such religious outlooks in post-industrial America, on one level, may promote maturity and forsaking consumerist illusions, while, on another level, providing an ineffectual opiate for the masses as their current material standard of living disappears in deep ecological reforms.

The Myth of Nature's Subjectivity

In addition to reducing a broad range of primal cultures into one complex univocal tradition, deep ecologists also construct Nature as an active subject that can teach people, if they cultivate their intuition or introspective consciousness, a special redemptive "Earth Wisdom."[45] Devall and Sessions maintain, "we may not need something new, but need to reawaken something very old, to reawaken our understanding of Earth Wisdom. In the broadest sense, we need to accept the invitation to the dance — the dance of unity of humans, plants, animals, the

44. See Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1975), p. 267.
45. See Doris LaChapelle, *Earth Wisdom* (San Diego: Guild of Tudors Press, 1978).

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earth. We need to cultivate an ecological consciousness."[46] Nature is seen as speaking, knowing, having needs, suffering, sharing selfhood, expressing, and growing. Primal traditions, in the last analysis, are vital because they have remained open to Nature's subjectivity, following its wisdom and sharing in its being.

Deep ecology's ultimate value of self-realization claims to go "beyond the modern Western *self* which is defined as an isolated ego striving primarily for hedonistic gratification or for a narrow sense of individual salvation in this life or the next."[47] Real selfhood, it is claimed, derives from human unity with Nature, realizing our mature personhood and uniqueness with all other human and nonhuman forms of being. Humanity must be "naturalized." The "human self" is not an atomistic ego, but a species-being and a Nature-being as a self-in-Self, "where Self stands for organic wholeness." Here, the essence of Nature appears to be a projection of an idealized humanity onto the natural world. Nature is "humanized" in a myth of subjectivity to change human behavior. The reanimation of Nature in deep ecology extends this selfhood to all natural entities — rocks, bacteria, trees, clouds, river systems, animals — and allegedly permits the realization of their inner essence.

As deep ecology depicts it, and as Lukács would observe, this mythical vision of Nature actually "refers to authentic humanity, the true essence of man liberated from the false, mechanizing forms of society: man as a perfected whole who inwardly has overcome, or is in the process of overcoming, the dichotomies of theory and practice, reason and the senses, form and content; man whose tendency to create his own forms does not imply an abstract rationalism which ignores concrete content; man for whom freedom and necessity are identical."[48] Deep ecologists, however, cannot really enter into an intersubjective discourse with or know concretely the being of rocks, rivers or rhinos, despite Muir's injunction "to think like glaciers" when confronting Nature. "The meditative deep questioning process" might allow humanity "an identification which goes beyond humanity to include the non-human world."[49] Still, a hypostatization of human species-being with whales, grizzlies, rain forests, mountains, rivers and bacteria is no more than the individual ecosophere's identification of his/her self with those particular aspects of Nature that idiosyncratically express their peculiarly personal

46. Devall and Sessions, *Deep Ecology*, *op. cit.*, p. ix.
47. *Ibid.*, pp. 66-67.
48. Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1971), p. 136.
49. Devall and Sessions, *Deep Ecology*, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

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human liberation. This ideological appropriation can only be (human) self-serving. One must ask if humanity is naturalized in such self-realization or is Nature merely humanized to the degree that its components promote this pecular human agenda for "maturity and growth."

This vision of self-realization appears to go beyond a modern Western notion of self tied to hedonistic gratification, but it does not transcend a narrow sense of individual salvation in this life or the next. Nature in deep ecology simply becomes a new transcendent identical subject-object to redeem humanity. By projecting selfhood into Nature, humans are to be saved by finding their self maturation and spiritual growth in it. These goals are found in one's life by in-dwelling psychically and physically in organic wholeness as well as the next life by recognizing that one may survive (physically in fact) within other humans, whales, grizzlies, rain forests, mountains, rivers and bacteria or (psychically in faith) as an essential part of an organic whole. Nature, then, becomes ecosophical humanity's alienated self-understanding, partly reflected back to itself and selectively perceived as self-realization, rediscovered in biospheric processes.

Biocentrism as "Soft Anthropocentrism"

Given deep ecology's vision of Nature, biocentrism might simply be a spiritually refreshing or psychically rewarding form of anthropocentrism. Under certain conditions, Naess' claim that all organisms and entities in the ecosphere are equal in intrinsic worth and share an equal right to self-realization makes sense. If we deforest tropical Brazil or vent fluorocarbons into the atmosphere we do deny rain forests and the ozone layer the right to their own existence. By fooling with Nature in this way, we are foolishly harming it and ourselves. As Devall and Sessions claim, "there are no boundaries and everything is interrelated. But insofar as we perceive things as individual organisms or entities, the insight draws us to respect all human and nonhuman individuals in their own right as parts of the whole without feeling the need to set up hierarchies of species with humans at the top."[50]

Still, Naess' "mutual predation" proviso largely belies this principle, because "in the process of living, all species use each other as food, shelter, etc.," which is "a biological fact of life." In turn, he observes: "a culture of hunters, where identification with hunted animals reaches a remarkably high level, does not prohibit killing for food. But

50. *Ibid.*, p. 68.

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a great variety of ceremonies and rituals have the function to express the gravity of the alienating incident and restore the identification."[51] This vision of biocentrism, then, mystifies the workings of a "soft anthropocentrism." Even if people reduce their needs, and live with minimum rather than maximum impact on other species and the earth in general, humans' interrelations with Nature still will remain anthropocentric given human technological powers and biological facts of life. Rocks and trees do not use humans — except for perhaps recycling the stray molecules from decayed human bodies — for their survival or self-realization. Humans, however, do move, crush, and chip rocks as well as chop, carve and burn trees to create shelter, tools, food or medicines. Individual nonhuman entities or organisms are treated with less respect, equality and rights by humans. Even if people abdicate as lords and masters of Nature, the latter still will feel the pressure of human hunters and gatherers. Although humans could change many of their ways, such predation still would be far from mutual. We might let great white sharks, like "Jaws," eat as many swimmers as he can find without fear of reprisal or allow grizzlies to chow down on campers and livestock as their mode of self-realization. But, will we allow anthrax or cholera microbes to attain self-realization in wiping out sheep herds or human kindergartens? Will we continue to deny salmonella or botulism micro-organisms their equal rights when we process the dead carcasses of animals and plants that we eat? In the end, people inevitably put themselves above other species and natural entities, as deep ecology accepts, "simply to live." Rituals of attonement or identification clearly may limit the extent of destruction by changing the overall perception of Nature, but these mystifications of humans "not coming first" do not necessarily drive a stake through the heart of anthropocentrism. Human predators, who say their Nature prayers or do their attonement rituals, are still predatory anthropocentrists as far as their prey is concerned.

The norms of biocentrism, then, would reenchant Nature to make new, more limited anthropocentric claims against the ecosphere. Polluted or abused natural settings cannot satisfy these spiritual demands; thus, deep ecology extends subjectivity to Nature as a means of limiting environmental abuse. As Devall and Sessions basically admit, the norm of biocentric equality would guarantee "an overriding vital human need for a healthy and high-quality natural environment for humans, if not for all life, with minimum intrusion of toxic waste, nuclear radiation

51. Naess, "Identification," *Deep Ecology*, *op. cit.*, p. 262.

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from human enterprises, minimum acid rain and smog, and enough free flowing wilderness so humans can get in touch with their sources, the natural rhythms and flow of time and place."[52] The emphasis still falls on people and their needs. Dressing up such human-centered appropriation of Nature in rituals or myths would make it more psychically rewarding or spiritually refreshing, but biocentric equality comes across as the "soft anthropocentrism" befitting a minimal pressure on the Earth. Yet, it seems doubtful that even a primal hunting and gathering society could consistently meet the strictures of a "hard biocentrism," much less an ecologizing post-industrial society.

The "Modern" Core of Deep Ecological Subjectivity?

Deep ecology's critique of the Enlightenment schema is neither as thorough nor as a radical as its advocates claim. By citing new norms to constrain humanity's destruction of the ecosphere, deep ecologists aspire to overturn the Enlightenment schema underpinning advanced industrialism's instrumental rationality. In adopting examples they see in primal cultures, deep ecologists believe they can effectuate Nature's reenchantment, the development of nondominating sciences, and an emergence of a new ecological society by creating new forms of human selfhood. Although deep ecology presents these goals as tantamount to the abolition of man's domineering power over Nature, it would appear instead that human power would not be replaced by biocentric equality as much as it would be displaced by a silent anthropocentrism in this new human subjectivity.

The new philosophy of nature might seal "the death of man" in ecological functioning by supplanting a coercive set of human power relations with a new discipline of ethical surveillance (self-administered by the subject in Taoist meditation, Buddhist self-in-Self introspection, and mythic Native American purification rituals) to reconstitute human subjectivity within natural subjectivity. The sites of power plainly would shift, because the disciplines of self and social understanding would be forced into new polarities of value and practice.[53] In constituting ecospheric or biospheric entities as subjects, humanity would become, following Leopold's (1968) paradoxical idealization, just "plain citizens" in an egalitarian biotic/geological/atmospheric community.[54] The strategies

52. Devall and Sessions, *Deep Ecology*, *op. cit.*, p. 68.
53. See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage, 1979).
54. Aldo Leopold, *Sand County Almanac* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968).

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of ecosophy might shift human power over Nature (and man by implication) from external sovereign control in a Hobbesian sense to internal participative normalization with Nature in a new Foucauldian sense.

Much of the modern Enlightenment schema could survive these transformations. Enforcing harmony with Nature might be as destructive and domineering as attaining dominance over Nature. Deep ecology's construction of re-enchantment, mature selfhood, and Nature bear the birthmarks of modernity in its conception of post-modern as primal pre-modernity. In this regard, deep ecology's confrontation with technocratic industrialism mirrors Rousseau's confrontation with the Enlightenment.[55] The good person, or ecosophical people, should follow "the voice of Nature" (biocentrism) not "the voice of Reason" (anthropocentrism), which simply expresses instrumental strategies for satisfying corrupt social desires. As subjects of the dominant worldview, people disenchant the world and seek instrumental control in the false voice of Reason. Yet, these corrupting social forces interfere with people's following their true natural sentiments. If we develop, as Naess, Devall, Sessions or Snyder claim, our alleged intuition of Earth Wisdom or attune our sentiments to Nature, then we can tap into new realms of true freedom. Even so, this pure voice of Nature, speaking through individual conscience in the language of virtue, still expresses a very modern concern for individual self-realization of every subject's being.

While deep ecology casts this shift in subjectivity as a revival of primalism, it also might be a Rousseauian revitalization of self-expressive modernism.[56] Nature here speaks of virtues and freedoms that are those of sovereign individuals, creating themselves by rescuing themselves from the corruptions of modernity in finding their personal freedom in its "natural rhythms" or "flows of time and place." Once recovered in the "real work" of self-realization, Nature as a healing force or foundation of virtue empowers people to attain full self-expression. Like Rousseau's modern ethic of individual expression, each of us — humans, rocks or rivers — has a nature to be revealed, expressed, realized in complete and equal self-fulfillment for deep ecologists. Modern subjectivity, then, is not so much overcome as much as it is made into an equal entitlement and guaranteed to everything in the ecosphere, knowing all

55. See Timothy W. Luke, "On Nature and Society: Rousseau Versus the Enlightenment," *History of Political Thought*, V (1984), pp. 211-243.

56. See Marshall Berman, *The Politics of Authenticity: Radical Individualism and the Emergence of Modern Society* (New York: Atheneum, 1970); and, Robert Nisbet, *Quest for Community* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953).

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along that humans still have the best crack at enjoying these benefits.

Deep ecology actually may not go far enough and essentially can go no further. It tends to "green" or "soften" the Enlightenment schema, but it does not actually overturn its workings. Primal pre-Enlightenment traditions are pared down to suit the particular needs of some post-modern intellectuals, who take from them only what they need to assail advanced industrialism's ecological abuse. Diverse types of reenchantment, myth and ritual also are embraced categorically without much thought to their potential operational interests nor their probable legitimation of a new hyper-instrumental science. An ethic of self-realization is espoused that projects modern individual self-expression as an ontological quality of nature. By the same token, the precept of biocentrism seems to occlude a soft anthropocentrism in issuing a license of "mutual predation" to Nature's most successful and destructive predator — people. Finally, deep ecology could function as a new strategy of power for normalizing new ecological subjects — human and nonhuman — in disciplines of self-effacing moral consciousness. In endorsing self-expression as the inherent value of all ecospheric entities, deep ecology also could advance the modern logic of domination by retraining humans to surveil and steer themselves as well as other beings in accord with "Nature's" dictates. As a new philosophy of nature, then, deep ecology provides the essential discursive grid for a few enthusiastic ecosophical mandarians to interpret Nature and impose its deep ecological dictates on the unwilling many.

The "Politics" of Deep Ecology

Given these conceptual problems in the deep ecological program, how can deep ecology be situated politically within the existing system of power? In the last analysis, Naess, Devall and Sessions respond to the environmental crisis with "an examination of the dominant worldview in our society, which has led directly to the continuing crisis of culture."[57] Their practical political answers essentially present "an ecological, philosophical, spiritual approach for dealing with the crisis." Still, as Marx suggests, if "it is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness," then what sort of social existence or class position has determined the shape of deep ecological consciousness?

Basically, as Blea states, "deep ecology has been developed by outdoors

57. Devall and Sessions, *Deep Ecology*, *op. cit.*, p. ix.

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persons — mountain climbers, backpackers, field biologists — with experience in observing natural phenomena and comes from the conservation/preservation movement. It "seeks to develop a new paradigm, questions the essence of human civilization, fundamentally condemns human overpopulation and industrialism, is *anti-modern* and *future* primitive, bio-regional, reinhabitory, and resacralization."[58] Not surprisingly, then, deep ecologists now look to these people and their practice for the discipline, rituals and teaching of ecological consciousness. Taking care of a place, bringing an attitude of watchful attention to the environment, focusing on self in Nature, finding maturity and joy in natural being, and simply doing outdoors activities are basic values shared by many outdoors persons. If they are done "with the proper attitude," many personal leisure pursuits, "like fishing, hunting, surfing, sunbathing, kayaking, canoeing, sailing, mountain climbing, hang gliding, skiing, running, bicycling and birdwatching,"[59] are endorsed by deep ecologists as a clear path to ecological awareness.

These modes of social existence do determine the consciousness and practical programs of the deep ecology movement, but they also expose a mystification. Many of these outdoor activities for finding the right ecological *dharma* also are highly industrialized, overstylized modes of corporate consumerist leisure. Admittedly, free-form mountain climbing, fishing, running or sun bathing do not necessarily demand hi-tech equipment, but bicycling, surfing, hang gliding, skiing, hunting or kayaking are among the most deeply entrenched bastions, as Abbey decries, of "industrial tourism." A self-contained industrial tourist, who brings all of his/her food, clothing, shelter and equipment from the leisure industry or supermarket, can pretend to relate to Nature as a biospherical equal by finding self-realization on a sunny weekend. A great many ordinary workers, shopkeepers and farmers also might know and enjoy the outdoors on ecological terms, but deep ecology, as a philosophy for properly outfitted mountain climbers, backpackers, and field biologists, could also be mistaken here for the ideology of white-collar intellectuals or professional-technical workers defending their environmental "positional goods."[60] Rock cliffs, back country powder, trout pools, forest trails, monster breakers, elk herds, class three river rapids, or bird preserves clearly can be enjoyed more thoroughly by a few

58. Chim Blea, "Animal Rights and Deep Ecology Movements," *Synthesis*, 23 (1986), pp. 13-14. Excerpted from *Earth First!*, Vol. VI (June 21, 1986).

59. Devall and Sessions, *Deep Ecology*, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

60. See Fred Hirsch, *Social Limits to Growth* (London: Routlege & Kegan Paul, 1977).

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individuals to the extent that most others cannot enjoy them. It makes sense for deep ecologists to condemn human overpopulation or resacralize the bio-region they wish to enjoy; it would revalorize these environmental benefits as their positional goods. Unfortunately, nomadic grub eaters cannot produce hi-tech composite surf boards, eighteen-speed trail bikes, or sophisticated hang gliders. Who will make such goods or produce food while others seek self-realization and biocentric equality? The anti-modern, future primitive condemnation of industrial civilization by many deep ecologists is not really total, but its contradictory partialities are mystified in the social forms of life that generate this consciousness.

Beyond these basic mystifications of its class origins, the eight essential principles of deep ecology elaborated by Naess and Sessions are lacking as practical dictums or as a political program.[61] First, the notions that (1) the well-being of human and non-human life have intrinsic value apart from human uses, that (2) the diversity of life forms contributes to these intrinsic values, and, finally, that (3) humans have no right to reduce this rich, diversity except to satisfy vital needs are all important goals. Blea, for example, argues that all things are equally valuable from plants to people to clouds, but animals are no more crucial than plants or mammals than insects. However, rare species and endangered individuals in rare species as they become endangered are more valuable than more abundant species and individuals of such species. Thus, if one was caught in a spring brushfire a deep ecologist would be bound ethically to save a California condor hatchling over a human child, because the former — given its rarity — is much more valuable. Likewise, how should a deep ecologist react to a Native American killing eagles, which are an endangered species, merely for its totemically-valued feathers? Nature is believed to know best, hence, humanity should not assign good or evil labels to the cycles of suffering, pain and death in Nature — people should just let it be. Such attitudes, in turn, clearly fulfill the fourth principle of deep ecology, namely, that the flourishing of nonhuman life necessarily requires a decrease in human life.

Yet, deep ecologists offer few criteria or no standards for practicing these precepts. If humans have no right to reduce the diversity of life, except to satisfy vital needs, then what are the standards for identifying vital needs? Suffering, pain and death are defined as natural or evitable. Can humans destroy viruses and bacteria to cure disease? Can humans eat all plants if game is meagre or turn to any game animals if crops or natural grazing foods fail? Can humans reduce the diversity

61. Devall and Sessions, *Deep Ecology*, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

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of a river basin with dams to control floods that let rivers or rain become what they are, and allow crops to displace natural vegetation and alter nitrogen fixation cycles in the existing topsoil? Nature has let California condors, the tiger, African elephants, and blue whales suffer and die in their ecological niches as humans or draft animals supplant them. Should humanity act otherwise or let it be?

Deep ecologists should not necessarily have all the answers now, but they do need substantive criteria for arriving at such answers in the future. Right now, however, all that deep ecology seems to offer are new symbolic rituals of sacralization instead of substantive rational criteria for choosing between alternatives. As Blea suggests, "I thank pieces of wood I gather for my fire, I treat as sacred whatever I eat or use to fulfill vital needs whether it be animal, plant or mineral. . . . We, as Deep Ecologists recognize the transcendence of the community over any individual, we should deal with all individuals — animal, plant, mineral, etc. — with whom we come into contact with compassion and *bonhomie*. Some we will use to fulfill vital needs, some will use us to fulfill their own vital needs, some (like burros in the Grand Canyon) we may need to kill to protect the integrity of the community, but all should be treated with respect and love."[62] Here, again, one sees a soft anthropocentrism at work in Nature sacralization. People will continue to cut and burn trees, kill and eat plants and animals, or isolate and kill germs to fufill vital human needs or protect the integrity of humanly defined ecocommunities. As Alan Watts noted, when people want food, "cows do scream louder than carrots,"[63] but deep ecologists do not seem troubled by such distinctions or provide criteria for judging between cows and carrots, rocks and rivers, or people and ptomaine. After deep ecological training, it appears that a ritual prayer, the right attitude of respect, or compassionate loving gratitude will rationalize and legitimate softer anthropocentric actions. In other words, deep ecologists ultimately are "outdoors persons," who are brave, clean, thrifty, reverent and obey the laws of the pack. Serious abuses of Nature will probably lessen, but the human being still is "more equal" than other beings in deep ecology's Animal Farm.

Second, the idea that (4) human life must reduce its population to flourish itself as well as to promote nonhuman life, because (5) human interference in the nonhuman world is excessive and worsening, presents many practical difficulties. These principles might be true, but who

62. Chim Blea, "Animal Rights," *op. cit.*, p. 14.

63. See Warwick Fox, "Deep Ecology: A New Philosophy for Our Time," *The Ecologist*, 14 (1984), pp. 194-200.

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decides how to decrease human populations where, when and why? In the developed world, many people see the underdeveloped world overpopulating itself, forcing Nature into collapse. While in the underdeveloped world, more human life in new children promotes the continuation of their parents' individual human lives. And, excessive consumerism in the developed world is seen by the underdeveloped world as excessive and worsening, causing Nature to collapse. Most people will not voluntarily stop reproducing to protect the survival of Nature. Even so, if people did come into Earth Wisdom, it also would seem that reproduction is "natural." It is "letting Nature be" by finding one form of self-realization in new life. To make these principles actually work, vital human needs, like those of food, shelter, clothing, health or life itself, probably cannot be satisfied. A "hard biocentrism" versus a "soft anthropocentrism" would reduce the population. But, existing technologies of comfort and security would have to suspended or outlawed as famine, disease, the elements, or reinhabitory predators reduced populations.

Third, principle (6) is the least developed and the most problematic: policies must change to transform economic, ideological and technological structures into something not like today's, which implicitly will fulfill the dictates of principles one through six. Beyond (7) shifting human satisfaction to appreciate the quality of life over higher quantitative standards of living, deep ecology has no program. At best, in ridiculing the strategies of reform environmentalism, it only offers the traditional solutions of moral anarchism, namely, changing the self to change society with individual acts of will guided by "correct" conscience/consciousness in a pressing situation of necessity to save humanity. Devall and Sessions claim that "if we seek only personal redemption we could become solitary ecological saints among the masses of those we might classify as 'sinner' who continue to pollute. Change in people requires a change in culture and vice versa. We cannot ignore the personal area nor the social, for our project is to enhance harmony with each other, the planet and ourselves."[64] This outlook leads to the last principle (8) namely, those who subscribe to these points have an obligation to directly or indirectly implement them.

Unfortunately, these feeble injunctions will not empower the minority tradition in new ecological communities. There is not a secure theory of the state, ideology, technology, or the economy here. Deep ecology fails to admit how many people willingly and enthusiastically will volunteer

64. Devall and Sessions, *Deep Ecology*, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

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in the rape of Nature to enjoy corporate consumerism. Today's Michelob philosophy of "you can have it all," while "living on the edge" often *is* seen as spiritually much more satisfying than Earth Wisdom. As revolutionaries, deep ecologists fail to ask or answer Lenin's question of advanced industrialism: "Who, Whom?"

Deep ecology in the last analysis is "utopian ecologism." As a utopia, it presents alluring moral visions of what might be; at the same time, it fails to outline practicable means for realizing these ecologically moral visions. Deep ecologists are caught in the trap of endorsing new visions for new "ecotopias," but they do not even have a practical program for future primitive reinhabition or bio-regional community-building. Political action is displaced into the realm of ethical ideals, making it every individual's moral duty to change him or her self in advancing cultural change. Yet, without the opportunity to change collective activity — in the economy, ideology, technology or polity — these personal moral regenerations might become only a quietistic, post-modern Taoism of finding the right path in an evil society.[65] On the one hand, Naess suggests his vision of deep ecology is virtually idiosyncratic; he strongly enjoins others to concoct their own ecological omelettes.[66] On the other hand, Devall and Sessions conclude that deep ecology stands for these ultimate values: "Inward and outward direction, two aspects of the same process. We are not alone. We are part and parcel of the larger community, the land community. Each life in its own sense is heroic and connected. In the Bodhisativa's words, "No one is saved until we are all saved. . . The process of developing maturity is simpler than many think. Like water flowing through the canyons, always yielding, always finding its way back, simple in means, rich in ends."[67] Deep ecologists can claim these values as their final goals. However, such principles for "interpreting the world" have little political promise for "changing it."

If the economy, ideology and technology of corporate consumerism are to change, then one must ask: Who dominates Whom? How? Why? Where? What is to be done? Deep ecology does not address these basic questions or provide convincing answers. Deep ecologists also prematurely dismiss the contributions, which initially may be needed in their new society, being made by reform environmentalism

65. Tim Luke, "Informationalism and Ecology," *Telos* 56, (Summer 1983), pp. 59-73.
66. See Arne Naess, "Intuition, Intrinsic Value and Deep Ecology," *The Ecologist*, 14 (1984), pp. 210-204.
67. Devall and Sessions, *Deep Ecology*, *op. cit.*, p. 205.

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in the areas of alternative agriculture, alternative technology or appropriate architecture.[68] More importantly, they also ignore the promise of social ecology in the areas of ecological politics, urban reconstruction or practical strategies of transformation.[69] Beyond engaging in non-violent resistance while acting from deep principles "to touch the Earth," there are no effective strategies for advancing real change in deep ecological thought, save those of continuing the symbolic politics or pressure tactics of reform environmentalism at the local level with a new, deep, long-range attitude "to better public policy" through frugality, modesty and restraint.

Conclusions: Justice and Deep Ecology

As political philosophy, deep ecology has failed to show how and why it should be implemented. Like many revolutionary programs, deep ecology lacks a "theory of transition." There are no practical means for changing people's everyday consumerist habits into those of an ectopian community without tremendous costs. One can agree with Snyder that "we must change the very foundations of our society and our minds. Nothing short of total transformation will do much good."[70] But, how does any highly developed society, like the US in 1980s with 235 million people, living because of the global imports and exports of transnational corporate capitalism in and out of huge metroplexes, reinhabit its bio-regions such that "the human population lives harmoniously and dynamically by employing a sophisticated and unobtrusive technology in a world environment which is 'left natural'."[71] Current world urbanism is nothing but an obstrusive technology that renders the organic into the inorganic. What happens to Los Angeles, Chicago, New York? If their corporate agricultural or municipal service supports are cut simply to return the LA Basin, Lake Michigan's South Shores and Manhattan Island to Nature, then Nature does know best how to cope — these people will suffer and/or die. The philosophical dreams of deep ecology ultimately entail a moral and political nightmare.

Deep ecological justice ultimately is post-distributional. It defines

68. See Lester R. Brown, *et al.*, *The State of the World 1988* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1988); and, Lester Brown, *Toward a Sustainable Society* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1981).

69. See Murray Bookchin, *The Ecology of Freedom* (Palo Alto, CA: Cheshire Books, 1982); and *Toward an Ecological Society* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1980).

70. Snyder, *Turtle Island*, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

71. *Ibid.* For example, see the sympathetic but also realistic appraisal of some deep ecological political strategies employed by the Earth First! group in Charles Bowden, *Blue Desert* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1986), pp. 87-98.

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away distribution systems or codes with human norms of fairness and equality as the sustaining apparatus of corrupt techno-industrial society. By calling for biospherical egalitarianism, deep ecology subjectifies Nature. Only by extending the right of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness (as the freedom of self-realization) to non-human life and inanimate entities can humans, in the vision of deep ecologists, for the first time, allegedly enjoy their rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness in emancipated Nature. Justice is made into an attribute of all-selves-in-Self working toward their peculiar self-realization.[72] Therefore, humans must transform their hitherto anthropocentric modes of existence, out of the new sense of "fairness" to all otherness growing from an ecosophical consciousness, to promote this new biocentric justice.

This quest for "natural unity in process" or "biospherical egalitarianism" bears the marks of deep ecology's inner contradictions. The soft anthropocentrism of deep ecology, which favors the Nature-regarding interests of humans, spreads intrinsic value evenly across the ecosphere in principle as it continues to overvalue certain humans over other humans, animals, plants, and inanimate entities. Yet, as Fox argues, "the only universe where value is spread evenly across the field is a dead universe."[73] Deep ecologists, in stressing first principles and new macrological forms of consciousness, really do not develop an adequate theory of justice or a workable system of ethics beyond the retro-reasoning of a mythic primalism. While acknowledging that killing, pain and suffering are natural and necessary, they advance no consistent criteria for deciding between alternatives when such acts are necessary. We ought to treat all of Nature better by not polluting or abusing the earth, but this is a clear choice between an obvious good and certain evil. How do we decide between two "goods" or two "bads" in conflict? Deep ecology provides few guideposts on this rougher ground. Until it comes to grips with its conceptual flaws and political contradictions, the answers that deep ecology provides as political philosophy must be held suspect. Otherwise, deep ecologists simply could reproduce at different levels of destruction the many tragedies they decry happening under the dominant worldview of advanced industrialism.

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72. Naess, "Identification," in *Deep Ecology*, *op. cit.*,p. 256-270.
73. Fox, "Deep Ecology," *op. cit.*, p. 199.

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Democracy and Abundance: the Declining Middle and Postliberal Politics

Robert Antonio and Tim Knapp

Democracy and abundance have almost always been at the heart of American ideals about the "good life." The framers of the constitution envisioned possible states of affairs in which the organization of resources and distribution of rights, responsibilities, and goods would realize these core values and generate legitimacy and consensus. Their concept of democracy defined what American society was and what it should become. Various advocates proposed social and political changes that seemed possible and even "necessary" to important segments of the citizenry. Jefferson's participatory democratic vision stressed equality and plenty.[1] Its self-governing citizenry were primarily agricultural independent producers, with a much smaller contingent of artisans, petty manufacturers, and merchants.[2] The republican good life, both public and private, called for morally autonomous conduct which, in turn, required economic independence. Since productive propertylessness

1. Women and Blacks, however, were excluded from participation. See Richard K. Matthews, *The Radical Politics of Thomas Jefferson* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1984), pp. 53-95; Drew R. McCoy, *Political Economy in Jeffersonian America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), pp. 236-58.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 48-75; Matthews, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-52. Jefferson wanted all male citizens to have the opportunity to own at least 50 acres of land (*Ibid.*, p. 27). His scheme of independent producers was rooted in the society of his day. In colonial America, roughly 80% to 85% of the male population were small farmers, and most owned their land. The 10% to 12% of white male aristans or merchants owned their tools and worked mostly in small family enterprises. See Edwin J. Perkins, *The Economy of Colonial America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), pp. 10, 41-43, 80-82. Excluding slavery and gender inequality, American society has never been more equal economically than it was in the later colonial and early postcolonial eras.

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and wage labor would breed dependence and split society into warring factions,[3] republicans held that European-style industrialism could not support democracy and would have to rely ultimately on administrative domination and coercion to maintain social order.[4] But in Jefferson's era, the socio-economic basis for realizing a republican society was already passing away. The centers of power had shifted to the towns and expansion of urban markets was monetarizing the countryside. The price system and market exchange eroded communal interdependencies and traditional social exchange networks of insular agrarianism and undermined its personalistic social bonds. The new concept of capitalism expressed more aptly what was coming into being. Hamilton argued that commercialization necessitated large domestic markets to absorb growing agricultural surpluses and that industrialism was essential to urbanization and overall development of the nation's resources. Whereas republican agrarianism would be materially backward, culturally stagnant and politically parochial,[5] capitalist development promised social dynamism and cultural enrichment. Capitalism permitted a free-play of private interests that eliminated provincial restrictions on individual enterprise and ended communal regulation of the economy. Federalists understood that the development of large manufacture required a massive expansion of propertyless wage workers whose dependency would preclude self-governance.[6] Consequently, they made no pretenses about the congruence of abundance and participatory democracy, and instead called for an administered society dominated by the commercial and industrial strata.[7]

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3. McCoy, *op. cit.*, pp. 105-35, 236-59.

4. The republican argument about the connection of political autonomy and economic equality differs from the Marxist account. Whereas communism calls for universal expropriation of private productive property in the name of the abstract collectivity, radical republicanism proposes universal ownership of such property by concrete family units. The two accounts have contradictory implications concerning the role of state and bureaucracy. Gouldner raised the possibility that private property might be the basis for all civilized society and called it the "nightmare" of Marxism. See Alvin W. Gouldner, *The Two Marxisms*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), pp. 380-89.

5. McCoy, *op. cit.*, pp. 96-97, 148-49.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 134. Adam Smith, in *The Wealth of Nations* (New York: Penguin Books, 1970), pp. 357-59, was explicit on this, arguing that wage workers lacked the "information," "education" and "habits" necessary to make informed decisions about public policy and that they were incapable of understanding the public interest or the connection of their own interests to any broader good. Hamiltonians agreed.

7. Hamilton considered decentralized, participatory democracy a "disease." Gerald Stourzh, *Alexander Hamilton and the Idea of Republican Government* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1970), pp. 40, 48-56, 80-94.

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Abundance was central to both perspectives. Republicans believed they could avoid stagnation by westward expansion and free trade. Universal, productive property ownership and ample foreign markets for agricultural produce would counterbalance the absence of large manufacture and big cities, providing controlled, community-sustaining economic growth. They planned for public education, applied science and rational self-administration to provide additional protection against traditionalist strangulation of society and of the economy. Republicans did not want an austere subsistence economy,[8] yet they were willing to sacrifice those aspects of material abundance that conflicted with participatory democratic goals. Capitalist advocates countered that abundance was impossible without extensive industrialization,[9] and called for state-assisted development of the institutional infrastructure required by capitalist accumulation. Contrary to republicans, their ideal of abundance overshadowed their less robust conception of democracy. Debate over the two positions raised fundamental questions about the relation of inequality to despotism. Tocqueville argued that America's leveled social order had despotic potentials that would be realized were it to follow Europe's path. He warned about the consequences of an expanded urban underclass already on the rise in the largest eastern cities[10] and, with the republicans, believed that American democracy could survive only if the vast majority of citizens remained property-owning independent producers. An inevitable administrative centralization accompanying industrialization, in Tocqueville's words, would usher in an era of "orderly, gentle, peaceful slavery. . . ."[11] "Administrative despotism" would preserve the formal freedoms and appearance of democracy, but would entail a mass depoliticization supplanting republican self-governance with bureaucratic management.

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8. McCoy, *op. cit.*, pp. 236-39; Matthews, *op. cit.*, pp. 47-48.

9. That large manufacture would result in abundance and progress was a central assumption of early political economy and was retained in Marx's portrayal of capitalist development (which supposedly makes people "rich in needs"). See Alexander Hamilton, "From the Report on the Subject of Manufactures (December 5, 1791)," in *The Political Economy of the American Revolution*, Nancy B. Spannaus and Christopher White, eds. (New York: Campaigner Publications, 1977), pp. 375-442; Adam Smith, *op. cit.*, pp. 479-520; Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The German Ideology* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1964), pp. 71-77, 80-86; Karl Marx, *Grundrisse* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), pp. 408-10, 690-712; *Capital*, Vol. 3 (New York: International Publishers, 1967), pp. 436-41.

10. Tocqueville believed that American equality and democracy would be undermined by industrialization. See Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, 1969), pp. 9, 56-57.

11. *Ibid.*, pp. 692.

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Economic Abundance and Postindustrial Society

More than a century later, Marcuse spoke of "comfortable, smooth, reasonable, democratic unfreedom," implying that prevailing conditions in post-WWII US had made the Tocquevillean nightmare a reality.[12] As predicted, wage labor was nearly universal and independent production was in eclipse. 19th century capitalists could not have imagined this combination of "administrative despotism" and material abundance. Liberals believed that abundance had integrated wage workers into the mainstream. Conformity was bought with a minimum of coercion, as democracy increasingly became identified with material abundance.[13] According to the "liberal consensus," the capacity of American business for practically unlimited economic expansion and abundance, and the interventionist state's ability to "fine-tune" the economy were the basis of a new postindustrial "social system" that "worked" and had eliminated fundamental class divisions. This Pax Americana was threatened only externally by the communists.

The leading postwar sociologist, Talcott Parsons, pronounced the US to be the world's "lead society," arguing that an "educational revolution" had transformed American bureaucracy into a "collegial" meritocracy.[14] "Occupational upgrading" required the free exercise of professional skills and technical knowledge, and allegedly made bureaucratic authority obsolete. Organizational integration now derived from role occupants internalizing the core American value of "instrumental productivism" (the secularized remains of the Protestant ethic) and specialized professional norms. The framers' worry about capitalism's inevitable conflict between economic rationality and democratic community appeared to be overcome. Modern American organizations delivered abundance not through bureaucratic coercion but via voluntary compliance to the norms of rational status hierarchies based on achieved inequality. In this new Garden of Eden the talented were rewarded handsomely in accord with their achievements, while

12. Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), p. 1.

13. A 1963 *New York Times Magazine* article, "What Sort of Nation Are We?" maintained that although "the will of the majority is not reflected in many of our political institutions," the US was nonetheless deeply democratic. It was just that American-style democracy "must be interpreted as a social rather than a political phenomenon. It has meant that a greater and greater number of Americans have been able to ascend to a level of material security. . . that in other countries remains the privilege of exclusive minorities," because "social classes play so small a role in our national life." In Godfrey Hodgson, *America in our Time* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976), p. 161.

14. Talcott Parsons, *The System of Modern Societies* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1971), pp. 86-121.

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large surpluses allowed a comfortable subsistence for less competent and unfortunate members of society. And the organizational metarationalization yielded its magnificent bounty without expropriation of productive property, or even moderate redistribution of wealth.

Republican concepts of independent production and participatory democracy faded in the bright glow of abundance. Postwar social "scientists" and the popular media trumpeted the ideology of "class convergence," claiming that the significance of the remaining traces of class and status subordination was diminished by pervasive opportunities for upward social mobility and cultural homogenization. Supposedly, the nearly universal availability of the "standard package" (e.g., automobile, TV, suburban home) reduced vertical stratification to matters of taste and merit.[15] Liberals claimed that middle Americans had undergone "embourgeoisification" and that the "allegedly 'exploited' working class" was on the verge of "becoming the leisure class" of modernity.[16] In this climate democracy could hardly be distinguished from its economic underpinnings, namely the "voluntaristic" administrative structures that insured continuous material improvement of middle class life. Consensus liberals believed that postwar America had finally realized the ideals originally set forth in the federalist vision. The broad, affluent middle stratum was the pivotal feature of this society.

The Middle Class Since WWII

In the first 20 years of the postwar era, the US was heralded as history's first "middle class society." Casting their not-too-critical eyes about the 1960s' economic landscape, the editors of *Fortune* concluded that "the most conspicuous breakdown of class lines is the one that has taken place just in the past few years as the 'ex-proletarians' . . . are now the heart of the middle-income class."[17] Although a gross exaggeration, the idea of class convergence in a swelling middle was more than the product of a whimsical imagination. More people than ever

15. Paul Blumberg, *Inequality in an Age of Decline* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1981], pp. 9-64, explains class convergence theory and competing postwar ideas about class in the US. Polenberg, in *One Nation Divisible: Class, Race, and Ethnicity in the United States Since 1938* (New York: Penguin Books, 1980), pp. 86-207, covers the same territory, but provides detailed historical context and discusses class in relation to race, ethnicity, and religion.

16. Blumberg, *op. cit.*, pp. 27-28; Parsons, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

17. Fortune, *America in the Sixties: The Economy and the Society* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1960), p. 106.

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had attained middle class standing.[18] In the early postwar era, workers' real weekly earnings increased dramatically. Earnings of the average 30 year old male worker rose 6.4% annually in the 1950s, and strong gains continued at least through 1965.[19] Also, family incomes climbed in relation to wages; their real median income rose at an annual rate of 3.9% between 1947 and 1969, and the average of families with children grew even faster, 5.75% yearly over the same period. Further, as wages and family incomes rose, they became slightly more equally distributed.[20] This relative prosperity brought a noticeable improvement of living conditions, as many workers were able to attain the material trappings of middle class life. For example, the proportion of families owning their own home (the quintessential middle class symbol) increased dramatically. As a result of rising incomes, government assistance programs, and moderate prices, average workers in 1950 could carry the mortgage on a median-priced house for 14% of their gross monthly income.[21] Moreover, consumer goods such as home appliances and furnishings, clothes, automobiles, and leisure items were much more widely available than ever before. The growing consumption capacity of the "moneyed middle class" transformed the domestic market from a fragmented "class" vs. "mass" market into a new, more homogeneous mass market.[22] Finally, sharply increased numbers of white-collar employees in salaried professional and technical-managerial occupations within corporate firms were celebrated as the rise of a "new middle class." While the old middle class of farmers and small independent entrepreneurs shrank as a proportion of the total

18. Discussions of both the mass middle class in the early postwar period and the declining middle class in recent years have relied on an Americanized, neo-Weberian conception of class that focuses primarily on income and consumption patterns, and sometimes occupational prestige. See Kurt Mayer, "The Changing Shape of the American Class Structure," in *Social Research* 30 (Winter 1963), pp. 458-68.

19. Data are by Frank Levy as reported in Steven Greenhouse, "The Average Guy Takes It on the Chin," in *The New York Times* (July 13, 1986), p. 10F.

20. Bureau of the Census, *Money Income of Households, Families and Persons in the United States: 1984, Current Population Report*, No. 151 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1985), p. 33; Sheldon Danzinger and Peter Gottschalk, "Families with Children Have Fared the Worst," in *Challenge* 29 (March/April 1986), pp. 42, 44. On wage inequality, see Bennett Harrison, Chris Tilly, and Barry Bluestone, "Wage Inequality Takes a Great U-Turn," in *Challenge* 29 (March/April 1986), pp. 26-32.

21. Greenhouse, *op. cit.*, p. 10F; Kermit Baker and H. James Brown, *Home Ownership and Housing Affordability in the United States: 1963-1984* (Cambridge: The Joint Center for Housing Studies of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard University, 1985), pp. 10-11.

22. Fortune, *The Changing American Market* (Garden City: Hanover House, 1953), pp. 13-30.

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labor force after 1910, the new middle class more than doubled between 1910 and 1940, and continued expanding rapidly after WWII.[23] In the early postwar era, all these trends were materialized in new suburban shopping-center complexes, which seemed to be the geographic loci of the alleged upward economic and cultural homogenization. Changing income levels and distribution, consumption patterns and occupational structure supported claims about the expanding middle class.[24] However, projections that this destratification would continue were mistaken. Regular increases in workers' incomes ceased when earnings stagnated in the mid-1960s, but the worst was yet to come, as real average weekly earnings declined by over 15% between 1973 and 1987. Family incomes, despite rising female workforce participation, also stagnated from the mid-1960s into the early 70s, and declined slightly thereafter.[25] However, the decline of aggregate incomes does not tell the whole story, as simultaneous regressive redistribution of earnings and family incomes also thinned the ranks of the middle class. By one definition, the size of this class appears to have peaked around 1966, when over half of American families had incomes equivalent to between $15,000 and $34,999 in 1984 dollars. By 1984, that proportion had shrunk to 40%.[26] In the late 1960s and early 70s, the shrinkage of the middle class actually was beneficial, because more families moved upward out of the middle tier than downward. Conversely, since 1973, this net movement reversed, as the percentage of

23. Lewis Corey, "The Middle Class," in *Class, Status and Power*, Reinhard Bendix and Seymour Martin Lipset, eds. (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1953), pp. 371-80. See also Peter Drucker, "The New Majority," in *Readings in Sociology*, Edgar Schular, Thomas Hoult, Duane Gibson and Wilbur Brookover, eds. (New York: Thomas Crowell, 1971), pp. 286-92.

24. This expansion fell short of being all-inclusive. Michael Harrington's *The Other America* (New York: Macmillan, 1962) exposed the fallacious arguments of those who, like John Kenneth Galbraith in *The Affluent Society* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1958), claimed that poverty had become a residual problem of advanced capitalism. And Gabriel Kolko's *Wealth and Power in America* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1962) demonstrated that the growth of the middle class was not accompanied by a substantial reduction of the economic resources of the wealthy. In brief, the expansion of the middle class was a very real phenomenon, while extremes of wealth and poverty remained.

25. Bureau of the Census, *Money Income and Poverty Status of Families and Persons in the United States: 1986, Current Population Report*, No. 157, (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1987).

26. *Money Income of Households 1984,/op. cit.*, p. DC. Cf. also Robert Kuttner, "The Declining Middle," in *The Atlantic Monthly* (July 1983), pp. 60- 72; Stephen Rose, *Social Stratification in the United States: A Guidebook* (Seattle: Social Graphics Company, 1983), p. 11; and Lester Thurow, "The Disappearance of the Middle Class," in *The New York Times* (February 5, 1984), p. F3.

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families with incomes over $35,000 declined and the proportion with incomes below $14,999 increased substantially.[27]

The polarization of individual and family incomes, in turn, fragmented the mass consumer market, making the route to the middle class increasingly rocky (especially for young people). The home ownership rate among young families declined 8% from 1973 to 1985.[28] Trends in the consumption of home furnishings, automobiles, and clothing also suggest that many traditional middle class consumer items are now increasingly out of reach.[29] Finally, transfer payments to the middle class have been slashed. Particularly important are reductions in federal aid to higher education, which have increased significantly the costs of college degrees and threaten to cut the means of many middle class families for intergenerational reproduction of their social and economic positions. And this added pressure comes at a time when strong technical training and prestigious educational credentials are essential for avoiding a slide into the low wage portion of the service sector.

Poverty statistics clearly show the increasingly regressive redistribution of income. Between 1973 and 1983, the number of poor Americans rose by 54%, as over 12 million additional people swelled the ranks of those deprived of basic housing, nutrition, and health care. Given the increasing isolation and wanderings of the "new poor,"

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27. Bureau of the Census, *Money Income and Poverty Status of Families and Persons in the United States: 1985, Current Population Report*, No. 154 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1985), p.12.

28. The home ownership rate was kept from falling even lower only by many young couples taking on dangerously high mortgage payments. In contrast to the average mortgage being 14% of median gross monthly income in 1950, by 1984, homeownership costs amounted to 34%! The result was an increase in both mortgage delinquencies and foreclosures. See Baker and Brown, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-13; and Greenhouse, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

29. See Bruce Steinberg, "The Mass Market is Splitting Apart," in *Fortune* (November 28, 1983), pp. 76-82; and Blumberg, *op. cit.*, pp. 180-214. There are, of course, some dissenters from the declining middle thesis. See Neil Rosenthal, "The Shrinking Middle Class: Myth or Reality?," in *Monthly Labor Review* 108 (March 1985), pp. 3-10. And for an editorial objection see Robert Samuelson, "The American Job Machine," in *Newsweek* (February 23, 1987), p. 57. Others, such as Robert Lawrence ("Sectional Shifts and the Size of the Middle Class," in *The Brookings Review* 3 [Fall 1984], pp. 3-11) recognize the declining middle, but maintain that it is a temporary condition caused by demographic forces (such as the effects of the baby boom, rising labor force participation of women, and changing family composition). But empirical evidence points to the contrary. As a Federal Reserve Board economist put it: "The general perception of the shrinking middle is correct," and "demographic changes are not responsible for the bulk of the . . . decline in the size of the middle class." See Katharine Bradbury, "The Shrinking Middle Class," in *The New England Economic Review* (September/October 1986), pp. 41, 52.

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there is little doubt that official estimates understate this worsening problem. In the mid-1980s, a growing underclass of homeless people sleep in the street or in temporary shelters, and eat from garbage bins or stand in long lines at soup kitchens. In most American cities, gentrification exists right alongside crumbling infrastructures and mounting human wreckage.[30]

Deindustrialization and the Declining Middle

Structural change in the demand side of the labor market, resulting from deindustrialization, has been the primary cause of the declining middle class. The central factors have been the flight of capital from one region of the country to another or completely outside the nation's borders, and out of postwar types of manufacturing to new forms of weakly unionized manufacturing, high-tech and service industries with sharply reduced aggregate demand for skilled labor. Increasing hypermobility of capital contrasts with relatively stable investment patterns of the early postwar period and is a reaction to intensified international competition, global manufacturing overcapacity and profit squeezes stemming from the increased bargaining power of domestic industrial unions.[31] Accelerated capital mobility has reduced the power of labor and helped reverse the postwar trend toward higher, and more equally distributed wages.

Several trends in employment and earnings associated with deindustrialization have contributed greatly to the declining middle. First is

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30. William P. O'Hare, *Poverty in America: Trends and New Patterns* (Washington, DC: The Population Reference Bureau, 1985), pp. 7-9; Andrew Mair, "The Homeless and the Post Industrial City," in *Political Geography Quarterly* 5 (October 1986), pp. 351-68; Loretta Schwartz-Nobel, *Starving in the Shadow of Plenty* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1981), pp. 11-102. Michael Harrington, *The New American Poverty* (New York: Penguin Books, 1984).

31. It is important to note the confluence of domestic distributional struggles and changes in the international economy as underlying causes of deindustrialization. In the early postwar era, domestic capital traded wage concessions for labor peace and protection of managerial prerogatives. As a result, the share of national income going to labor rose from 66% in 1949 to 76% in 1973. See Beth A. Rubin, "Trade Union Organization, Labor Militancy, and Labor's Share of National Income in the United States, 1949-1978," in *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility* 5 (1986), pp. 223-42. America's preeminence in the growing world market allowed this reapportionment to take place without substantially squeezing capitalists' profits until about 1965. See Samuel Bowles, David Gordon, and Thomas Weisskopf, *Beyond the Wasteland* (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1983), pp. 95-97. Thereafter, capital responded by accelerated movements of resources out of high-wage areas and products, and into low-wage regions and countries and service industries where profits were bolstered. See Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison, *The Deindustrialization of America* (New York: Basic Books, 1982), pp. 3-21.

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manufacturing job displacement and inadequate reemployment. Between 1949 and 1969, the economy added almost 3 million production jobs in manufacturing, and with weekly earnings from these jobs rising considerably, many "ex-proletarians" were boosted into the middle class. However, between 1969 and 1986, a net 1.5 million production jobs were lost, while earnings of the remaining jobs stagnated.[32] With virtually all new employment coming in services since 1973, the majority of displaced manufacturing workers were able to find reemployment only at earnings levels substantially lower than their previous jobs had paid.[33] Thus many industrial workers tumbled out of the heralded, mass middle class as America deindustrialized. Moreover, the changing sectoral mix of jobs made it more difficult for young workers to earn their way into the middle class. Unlike previous periods, when industrial and public employment grew concurrently with expansion of the service sector, employment generation in the 1970s was much more uneven and concentrated. During that decade, fully 45% of new jobs created were in the "new tetrarchy" of eating and drinking establishments, health care, business services and finance. Each of these sectors has a lower proportion of total employees in supervisory positions than manufacturing, and each pays substantially less than the average wage of industrial workers. In recent years, this tendency for low-paying job creation has accelerated; between 1979

32. The recent resurgence of American manufacturing has not offset earlier losses of employment, nor has it reversed the downward trend in earnings. Between 1979 and 1986, nearly 2.1 million industrial jobs disappeared. As of April 1988, less than 16% of those jobs had been reestablished. Even as new manufacturing jobs are created, earnings continue to decline. Between 1979 and the first quarter of 1988, the average weekly pay of production/nonsupervisory manufacturing workers declined by about 3%. See Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Employment, Hours, and Earnings, United States, 1909-84* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1985), p. 54; Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Supplement to Employment and Earnings* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, June, 1987); and Bureau of Labor Statistics *Employment and Earnings* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, January through June, 1988).

33. Deindustrialization does not affect just production workers. A growing number of managers and technicians have also been displaced. See Candee Harris, "The Magnitude of Job Loss from Plant Closings and the Generation of Replacement Jobs: Some Recent Evidence," in *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* 475 (September, 1984), pp. 15-27; Thomas Owens and Marilyn Clark, *Job Loss and its Effects on Dislocated Workers and Their Families* (Portland: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 1984); and especially Louis Jacobson and Janet Thomason, *Earnings Loss Due to Displacement* (Alexandria: Center for Naval Analysis, 1979), pp. 1-2, who estimate that over the first five years following job loss, earnings reductions total twice the annual predisplacement income, and that over their remaining working lives, workers lose a total of 10-15% of what their income would otherwise have been.

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and 1984, 60% of all new jobs paid less than $7,000 per year.[34] Simply put, the supply of young workers outstripped the ability of the increasingly service-oriented economy to create middle income jobs to absorb them.[35] Consequently, as they reach their prime earning years, a smaller proportion of young workers are attaining middle class standing.[36] Finally, the growing inequality of earnings within the other major employment sectors is also squeezing the middle class. The trend toward fewer middle income jobs is not found exclusively in the service sector, but also characterizes the goods producing (including manufacturing) and public sectors.[37] Increasingly unequal distribution of earnings throughout the economy is contributing greatly to downward restratification.

Besides shrinking the size of the middle class, capital flight and deindustrialization corrode stable living environments. Most families that experience job displacement suffer the strains of deprivation, insecurity, and inactivity, and some are ripped apart by increased marital violence, health and mental problems, and drug abuse. Little evidence supports the conservative lore that economic hardship strengthens family bonds. Moreover, the costs of major plant shutdowns ripple outward, resulting in further layoffs and business failures among local subcontractors and retail outlets, causing eventually an erosion of the tax base and reduction of public services.[38] When younger and more qualified persons are forced to move, only the shell of community is

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34. Steinberg, *op. cit.*, p. 77. Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison, "The Great American Job Machine: The Proliferation of Low Wage Employment in the U.S. Economy," a study prepared for the joint economic committee of Congress (Washington, DC, 1986), p. 5.

35. The problem of absorbing new entrants into the labor market is made clear by the data on male incomes. The Bureau of the Census (*Money Income 1984, op. cit.*, p. 102) reports that the median yearly income of full-time, year-round male workers dropped by over $2,800 between 1973 and 1984 (and rose only slightly from its historically constant low level for women). See also Martin Dooley and Peter Gottschalk, "The Increasing Proportion of Men with Low Earnings in the United States," in *Demography* 22 (February, 1985), pp. 25-34.

36. See Kuttner, *op. cit.*, p. 69.; Thurow, *op. cit.*, p. F3; David Wessel, "U.S. Rich and Poor Increase in Numbers: Middle Loses Ground," in *The Wall Street Journal* (September 22, 1986), pp. 1+; and, Richard Easterlin, *Birth and Fortune* (New York: Basic Books, 1980), pp. 15-34.

37. Lawrence, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

38. See Owens and Clark, *op. cit.*; Susan Cunningham, "Shock of Layoff Felt Deep Inside Family Circle," in *APA Monitor* 14 (1983), pp. 10-11; Carolyn Perrucci, Robert Perrucci, Dena Targ, and Harry Targ, *Plant Closings: International Context and Social Costs* (New York: Aldine De Gruyter, 1988); and Louis Ferman and Jeanne Gordus eds., *Mental Health and the Economy* (Kalamazoo, MI: W.E. Upjohn Institute, 1978).

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left behind of older people and unemployables in decaying social and physical surroundings. Boomtowns, on the other hand, often attract new capital by their antiplanning, antiwelfare and antiunion environments, which provide neither community nor opportunity for nontechnical and nonprofessional members of the lower middle strata. Finally, the costs of deindustrialization have not been borne exclusively by large cities in the frostbelt. Many smaller cities and towns throughout the country have experienced equally destructive consequences.

Reindustrialization and American Renewal

By the late 1970s, economic stagnation, increasingly competitive world markets, and deindustrialization could not be ignored. Even the editors of *Business Week* contended that the decline of the American economy had been so precipitous that it required "sweeping changes in basic institutions" and "a new social contract."[39] The deepening economic problems, combined with foreign resource dependency, the political fallout from Watergate, the "Vietnam complex," and the Iran-hostage crisis indicated that the end of "the American Century" might be at hand. The feeble auto industry and home financing crisis struck middle Americans directly at the heart of their once proud everyday life. But the memory of the era of abundance was still fresh, and the populace was ripe for an "American renewal" and hasty reestablishment of hegemony. Since Keynesianism had been thoroughly discredited, and proposals for both corporatist and social democratic planning had been defeated in the recent legislative debates that eviscerated the Humphrey-Hawkins bill, the only path led back to the "free market."

"Supply-siders" contended that liberals pandered to the demands of "selfish minorities" with costly regulations, subsidies, and payments to individuals. The marginal tax rates of investors and businesses had been allegedly raised to pay for these programs, and, in addition, regulatory interference and red-tape had increased. Together, high taxes and bureaucratic blockages acted as powerful disincentives to capital investment and stifled risk-taking entrepreneurialism. In other words, the politicization of markets by an excessively democratic state undermined the material basis of the spirit of capitalism.

The supply-side "solution" was also hypnotically uncomplicated; restrain democracy, and restore incentives for capital formation by deregulation, privatization, redirection of government spending to the

39. Editors, "The Reindustrialization of America," special issue of *Business Week* (June 30, 1980), p. 56.

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military and reduction of taxes for wealthy investors.[40] But dedemocratization and regressive redistribution did not bring about the promised economic revitalization. Despite accelerated accumulation and increased corporate profits, slow growth and a variety of problems such as huge federal deficits, massive trade imbalances, multiple debt crises and farm problems persisted.[41] Most importantly, the erosion of the middle class and deindustrialization continued throughout the height of the so-called "Reagan Revolution." The economic basis for legitimacy was not reestablished, and by the twilight of Reagan's second term, supply-side economics was recognized as bankrupt by all but its most die-hard advocates.

Recently, social and cultural problems associated with deindustrialization have mostly been put aside in favor of efforts to restore economic growth. Despite initial promises that the rising economic tide would carry all boats, the "Reagan Revolution" scuttled the postindustrial dream of a middle class society. Instead, it brought us a new "realism" aimed at *growth without abundance*, and acceptance of widening class disparities. Such are the costs of an "opportunity society." The administration's seemingly schizophrenic embrace of historically opposed forms of fundamentalism expresses its position on inequality: free-market economics for accelerated accumulation at the top and copious rewards to the talented upper-middle, in contrast to cultural traditionalism and chauvinistic nationalism for increased discipline from below. Although Reaganism is on the wane, its wake has sharply narrowed dialogue over the present socio-economic predicament.

Despite lip service compassion about the growing underclass and cautious openness to European-style corporatist strategies, liberals have also drifted rightward. They too lack a plan for restoring abundance, and without accelerated accumulation even a retreat to a vastly scaled-down version of welfare liberalism is not feasible. Neoliberals, like their conservative counterpart, are "realists" who stress restored growth as their main agenda. Within the mainstream an obsession

40. See Jude Wanniski, *The Way the World Works* (New York: Basic Books, 1978); and George Gilder, *Wealth and Poverty* (New York: Bantam Books, 1981).

41. Despite rhetoric about a new era of growth, capital investment, and job creation, the record of the Reagan administration on all three accounts is lower than its predecessor's. See Richard D. Bartel, "In this Issue," in *Challenge* 29 (March/April, 1986), p. 3; and "Reaganomics Report Card," by the editors of *Dollars and Sense* 126 (May, 1987), pp. 6-8. The "swiss cheese" economic recovery was always demand-led, and has been sustained by deficit spending by the government, and record levels of business and consumer debt, rather than increases in either profits or consumer income.

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with efficiency rules out increased participation, accountability and redistribution as fatal to economic growth. The already thin postindustrial conception of democracy has been pared down further to administration without abundance or participation. Promises of security and stability, and the prospect of future plebiscites to cast out undeserving politicians are all that remain. Neither liberals nor conservatives have a coherent view to confront the wane of democracy and abundance.

Corporatists have advocated limited national planning to guide and accelerate the restructuring of the American economy.[42] While leaving fundamentally intact the existing structure of concentrated ownership and hierarchical control, they want to rationalize macroeconomic regulation and investment decisions to improve the functioning of domestic markets and to increase the international competitiveness of American corporations. Corporatist strategy calls for bureaucratic centralization of the haphazard pattern of private planning and state subsidies, but leaves unclear how central planners will be selected and made publicly accountable. Like the early advocates of capitalism and their postindustrial and supply-side offspring, American corporatists favor capitalist growth over democracy and stop far short of proposing a new framework. However, as contemporary Scandinavian societies attest, social-democratic variants of corporatism are also possible. The point is that corporatism is a somewhat vague conception that can be embodied in either a centralized capitalism (consistent with Hamilton's original vision) or centralized social democracy.[43]

The Exhaustion of Capitalism and Critical Postliberalism

Although they disagreed about the merits of capitalist development, the framers of the Constitution articulated ideals of democracy and abundance that focused on unrealized potentials. Postindustrial capitalism

42. See Robert Reich, "Why the U.S. Needs an Industrial Policy," in *Harvard Business Review* 60 (January/February, 1982), pp. 74-81; Felix Rohatyn, "Alternatives to Reaganomics," in *New York Times Magazine* (December 5, 1982); Michael Wachter and Susan Wachter, eds., *Toward a New U.S. Industrial Policy?* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983); and, Ira C. Magaziner and Robert Reich, *Minding America's Business* (New York: Vintage Books, 1983).

43. Critics have attacked the potentially authoritarian aspects of corporatism. See Dan Lavoie, "Two Varieties of Industrial Policy: A Critique," in *Cato Journal* 4 (Fall, 1984), pp. 457-82; and Terry Buss, F. Stevens Redburn, and Larry Ledebur, "The Economic Revitalization of America: An Overview of the Issues," in *Policy Studies Review* 1 (May, 1982), pp. 749-60. For a defense of Left corporatism, see Stewart Clegg, Paul Boreham, and Geoff Dow, *Class, Politics, and the Economy* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986), pp. 297-390.

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lacked this critical distance, describing postwar American technocracy as if it had already realized the Hamiltonian ideals. Economic contraction, political *dissensus*, and mounting social and environmental costs ended the postindustrial dream. The tension between capitalist development and community, feared by Jefferson, returned with a vengeance under Reagan; rationalization in the service of unregulated capital accumulation undermined abundance as well as social bonds and democratic participation.[44] In the wane of the Reagan era, the search is on again for alternative development strategies.

Orthodox Marxism has nothing to say on the subject. This vision of a completely "socialized," nonmarket economy shared the postindustrialists' naive equation of technical and social progress, their insensitivity to tensions between economic rationalization and community and their enthusiasm for administration over participation. Moreover, the repressiveness and inefficiency of "really existing socialism" has bankrupted the idea of total planning as an alternative. It is no surprise that this strategy has been abandoned even in the USSR. Conversely, European "social democracy" has sometimes been mentioned as a possibility. But the luster of this strategy has diminished considerably, following the economic slowdown, high unemployment, and rightward political winds that characterized most of the Continent by the 1980s. Though some health and welfare policies remain relevant to the American scene, Europe's generally stagnant, corporatist economies hardly provide a model for creating abundance or democracy in the US.[45] Finally, although American managers would love to reproduce the discipline of Asian workforces, deeply-rooted cultural differences preclude Japanization of American society. Seeing no alternative for the existing society, some liberals as well as numerous neo-Marxists have warned of a deepening legitimacy crisis and imply that a new consensus must be built before the technical and organizational problems with the economy can be solved.[46] Some emphasize a democratically reintegrated

44. Rationalization here refers to the capital mobility and capital flight that characterizes deindustrialization. See Bluestone and Harrison, *Deindustrialization, op. cit.*, pp. 3-21.

45. In a recent essay, Bluestone and Harrison point out that Western Europe had "virtually zero employment growth between 1973 and 1984." Thus, Europeans have tended increasingly to adopt American-style deregulation to stimulate growth (Bluestone and Harrison, "Job Machine," *op. cit.*, pp. 1, 46, ft. 1.). However, we do concur with Clegg's *et. al. (Class, Politics and the Economy, op. cit.*, pp. 356-90) argument that Swedish-style corporatism empowers a broad cross-section of wage workers and has pacifying social consequences.

46. The range of writers we are speaking of in this section includes the following: Daniel Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 1978);

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community bound by notions of the public good and a public philosophy, while others stress civil religion and moral education.

Most of these critics trace legitimacy problems to the excesses of unrestrained capitalist acquisitiveness, yet they also consider Marxist economism an authoritarian rationalization that makes matters even worse. They tend to locate potentially pacifying conditions within autonomous cultural spheres differentiated sharply from (or directly oppositional to) the existing political economy. For example, Bellah (*et. al.*) and Habermas both allege historically-rooted capacities for communication and community that counter the utilitarian and instrumental thrust of economic life.[47] Habermas leans toward foundationalism and discursive norms, whereas Bellah (*et. al.*) favors tradition and civil religion, but both imply that relatively autonomous cultural potentials, once elaborated through democratic social and political practices, would pacify social relations and humanize the economy. Though they often provide laudable defenses of democratic values, highly-generalized and abstract arguments about legitimacy provide little insight into how actual historical consensus can be generated in a climate of declining abundance and where the paramount standard of economic efficiency overrules unmet needs. Particularly, legitimacy critics do not deal with the economic underpinnings of legitimacy and democracy (although almost all favor economic reform). They overreact to the excesses of economism, pitting the normative against the instrumental sphere, and disembodying their emancipatory vision from the organizational and resource worlds that give them meaning. Consequently, their accounts tend to float formalistically above everyday life, reflecting, on an abstract level, the contemporary disjunction of economy and society.

Critical reindustrialists avoid the problems of legitimacy theorists by posing the issue of democracy directly in the context of proposals about redistributing economic power, democratizing corporate decision-making, and instituting publically responsive and accountable economic planning. They follow the Jeffersonian path, stressing the primacy of democracy and the necessity of economic equality, and

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Michael Ignatieff, *Needs of Strangers* (New York: Elisabeth Sifton Books, 1986); Arthur J. Vidich and Stanford M. Lyman, *American Sociology* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

47. Robert N. Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven M. Tipton, *Habits of the Heart* (New York: Perennial Library, 1986); Jürgen Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1975).

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holding that community-sustaining growth and democracy can be achieved concomitantly. Critical reindustrialists advocate comprehensive state regulation and public oversight of the private sector combined with widespread citizen participation in planning at the federal, state and local levels. Their "program" includes widely varied policy recommendations with diverse ends aimed at democratizing work settings, building community, cleaning up the environment, increasing political participation, expanding the social wage and social safety net, nationalizing or partially socializing certain industries, preserving a competitive sector and improving productive efficiency.[48] Although critical reindustrialists do not advocate widespread expropriation of productive property, they attach such strong constraints and responsibilities to capital that the existing relation of public and private sectors is turned on its head.

Critical reindustrialists also contend that publicizing and democratizing the management of productive resources and insuring a more equitable distribution of surpluses would gradually transform political life based on possessive individualism and crude impositions of power into governance by discursively-established public interests. In their view, legitimacy would foster worker self-discipline and heighten concern for community needs, while public regulation and planning would reduce waste by preventing powerful private interests (e.g., the military industry) from squandering resources. The resulting new energies and savings would pay for expanded redistribution and broadened protections in the workplace, community and environment. Although they admit that increased democracy would be imperfect, critical reindustrialists believe firmly that the aggregate social benefits will far outweigh the costs. Free-market critics counter that the approach is self-contradictory, because democratized economic decision-making and politicized markets entail a necessary sacrifice of economic efficiency that undermines growth and abundance.[49] Critical reindustrialists respond that the democracy vs. efficiency argument poses a false dichotomy that exaggerates the costs of planning and redistribution, ignores the benefits of participation and overlooks the costs of unconstrained

48. See Bluestone and Harrison, *Deindustrialization, op. cit.*, pp. 231-64; Gar Alperovitz and Jeff Faux, *Rebuilding America* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984); Michael Best and William E. Connolly, *The Politicized Economy* (Lexington: DC Heath, 1982), pp. 219-29: and Bowles, Gordon, and Weisskopf, *op. cit.*

49. Oliver Williamson states the latter position succinctly: "a tradeoff between performance and peer group democracy must be faced." See his *Markets and Hierarchies: Analysis and Antitrust Implication* (New York: The Free Press, 1975), p. 47.

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accumulation.[50] But critical reindustrialists underestimate the difficulty of harmonizing growth and community, and fail to analyze sufficiently the complex interrelation between economic rationalization, public goods and social needs. Their abiding faith that unspecified participatory processes will somehow conjure up sufficient value consensus and provide adequate surpluses to accommodate conflicting interests and to smooth out tensions between economic, technological and substantive rationalities is not well grounded. They have not confronted the conservative argument about the contradiction between economic democratization and economic efficiency, nor can they cope with the related issue that public concern for restored abundance (and economic efficiency) vastly overshadows any desire for increased democracy. Perhaps opportunities for democratic participation will bring a fundamental change but, regardless, critical reindustrialists cannot dismiss the matter of economic constraints, as the New Left did in the "post-materialist" 1960s, nor can they ignore current public apathy about democracy. Although they are aware of imposing cultural and institutional blockages to their proposed reforms, critical reindustrialists assume that continued erosion and compression of the middle class favor their analysis and the eventual formation of a new consensus about the relation between economy and society. They view contemporary American economic problems as part of a long-wave restructuring of world political economy, which is eroding the moorings of liberal society and, consequently, opening the field for dialogue about new forms of democratization.[51] But critical reindustrialists cannot specify how deep a crisis it will take before a new public discourse emerges, and it remains to be seen if a major recession will draw out a new version of democratic legitimacy or produce a war of conflicting interests.

Commercial concerns have almost always held the upper hand when dealing with issues of development. Competing postindustrial, supply-side, and corporatist visions have dominated the postwar debates over the economy. However, all these parties may have exhausted their resources for coping with present problems. In the past, Jeffersonian approaches have sometimes emerged in response to unresolved crises and major transitions. But in the 1980s, classical republican values

50. See Martin Carnoy, *et. al.*, *A New Social Contract* (New York: Harper & Row, 1983); and, Bowles, Gordon, and Weisskopf, *op. cit.*

51. The most comprehensive discussion of this position is by David M. Gordon, Richard Edwards, and Michael Reich, *Segmented Work, Divided Workers* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982) pp. 165-243.

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of democracy and abundance need to be radically reframed. None of the contemporary "critical" approaches are close to achieving this sufficiently to be pertinent to the individual citizen's life, and within the context of a larger vision that calls forth commitment and cooperation beyond self and household. Abstract appeals to broader ethical principles or to procedural norms are not enough. On the other hand, although critical reindustrialists understand that talk of democratization can be enlivened only when it is brought down to earth in workplaces and neighborhoods, they have not yet developed a concept of democracy appropriate to contemporary circumstances, and they lack clear substitutes for the outdated classical republican views about property and economic independence. Given the present state of affairs, these central economic underpinnings of society are probably a good place to *begin* discussing a postliberal, democratic society.

Since the 19th century emergence of the joint stock company, various global theorists have heralded the decline of individual proprietorship and the rise of the occupational role as nascent features of a postindustrial or postcapitalist order.[52] With regard to proprietorship, the debate concerns the mix of privatization and socialization, centralization and decentralization, and regulation and freedom. Although Marxism, social democracy and corporatism have been at least partly discredited, the present drift toward free-market ideas and deregulation cannot address adequately the declining middle and deindustrialization, and would have even less to say during a recession. However, new attempts to reformulate the relation between property rights and planning must be more sensitive than previous planning models to the problems of overcentralization and underparticipation. In the post-Reagan era, the degree and type of regulation of capital will likely emerge as a central area of debate as it did during the 1920s and 30s. A postliberal society must first clarify the meaning of proprietary rights and their relation to public planning and social welfare. Secondly, the republican concept of independence based on property ownership has to be rewritten, as even remaining "independent" producers cannot

52. These themes have been stressed by a variety of classical and modern theorists; e.g., in Marx's ideas about the progressive role of joint stock companies, large manufacture, and monopoly; Durkheim's discussion of occupational groups; Berle and Means' conception of the modern corporation; and Parsons' analysis of occupationalization. See Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 3, *op. cit.*, pp. 436-41; *Grundrisse*, *op. cit.*, pp. 584-90; Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society* (New York: Free Press, 1964), pp. 1-31; Adolf A. Berle and Gardner C. Means, *The Modern Corporation and Private Property* (New York: McMillan, 1932); Parsons, *op. cit.*.

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escape dependency upon the huge and fluctuating, international capitalist marketplace. The question of economic independence has never been addressed, except for the narrow spheres of the rights of property-holders and of the "freedom" of wage workers to sell their labor. Moreover, Marxist expropriation universalized economic dependence along with political powerlessness. In modernity, economic independence must be considered in relation to occupational rights: the right to a job, job security, reasonable work conditions, autonomous social relations and material well-being.[53] These "rights" were partially institutionalized in the accord between corporate capital and unionized labor during the postwar period of abundance, but were never extended to the large and weakly unionized competitive sector. They were raised again in more general form during the debate over the failed Humphrey-Hawkins Bill. But in recent years capital has reneged on its part of the bargain, opting for union busting, the discipling effects of rising underemployment and the antilabor policies of the Reagan administration. These conditions have heightened public concern about job security, and emergent support for occupational rights would likely grow stronger in an economic crisis. However, even if they were passed into law, the institutional and financial resources needed to guarantee these rights would still have to be found. Although critical reindustrialists have begun discussing these matters, their desired postliberal, Jeffersonian society is not yet in focus.

Democracy and the Shrinking Middle

Postwar liberals argued that the predominance of the great middle class proved Marx wrong and provided American society with its peculiar stability and legitimacy. However, the postindustrial explanation of postwar abundance as the product of a qualitative transformation of complex organization can be turned upside down. The US dominated the world market during the early postwar period, because it came out of WWII with its productive system and infrastructure intact, and as the world's hegemonic military power. During this era, the influx of resources funded accelerated expansion and rationalization of private and public bureaucracies. In this climate benevolent bureaucracies were able to provide a near full-employment economy and to extend civil rights to minorities and increased welfare rights to the poor, aged and infirm.

53. E.g., Alperovitz and Faux, *op. cit.*, pp. 257-81; and Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, *Democracy and Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 1986), pp. 27-63, 176-213.

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Convergence theorists, however, were mistaken about abundance having diminished significantly the enduring material and cultural gap between the small top of large financial and productive property-holders (with huge earnings from equity capital) and the rest of the populace.[54] They also overplayed homogenization, exaggerating the decline of racial, ethnic and religious differences and overlooking newly emergent status distinctions *within the middle* that came with the expanded job ladders, suburban neighborhoods, educational credentials and voluntary associations. Postwar economic growth in the private and public sectors, segmented and increased the number of managerial and technical positions, unionized blue-collar jobs, and lower white-collar occupations. Within this enlarged middle-class arose a hierarchy of middling status strata with significantly different opportunity structures, diversified life-styles, and varied consumption patterns. On both objective and subjective grounds these status differences had meaning for life. Social and political conflicts tended to play increasingly on the clashing interests of the different status strata. Tensions between the middle class and underclass were not eradicated, but tended to be managed in electoral politics, in debates over welfare state policy, and in micro-conflicts at the community and neighborhood levels. Moreover, the hottest class tensions were usually obscured by their connection with deep racial and ethnic animosities.

Finally, neither the middle class nor the underclass had opportunity for direct conflicts with the small and invisible top. The economic contraction of the 1970s and growing class disparities of the 80s wrecked earlier claims about a qualitatively transformed postindustrial capitalism. More importantly, shrinkage of the middle class and compression of its differentiated, internal status strata, combined with expansion of an increasingly desperate underclass, have begun a downward leveling of the American class structure. Between the lines of the strong empirical claims of consensus liberals about the rosy American path toward middle class society is their underlying theoretical assumption that strong and affluent middle strata provide the necessary economic underpinnings for modern democracy. Their high hopes for democracy were partly, and perhaps largely, a consequence of their belief that American capitalism had achieved a limitless capacity for economic expansion that would lead to abundance for all and a class convergence in

54. Blumberg, *op. cit.*; Hodgson, *op. cit.*, and Polenberg, *op. cit.*, provide copious references to sources and evidence about the perpetuation of class disparaties and the growth of the middle strata during the postwar era.

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the middle. Reagan's American renewal revived some short-term optimism, but failed to restore the postwar pattern of growth. The hotly competitive international business climate and huge federal deficit will limit future options for expansion of the public bureaucracy to stimulate economic resurgence and to relieve the misery of the underclass. A renewed progressive liberalism must be of a different shape and meet stiffer challenges than its precursor during the "Great Society" era. Presently, most of the latest post-Marxist theoretical efforts flounder in rather confused images of radical democracy and pluralism, and fail to provide any determinate political direction. Despite its shortcomings, classical Marxism, like the Jeffersonian and Hamiltonian visions, contained a reasonably coherent image of the society that was coming into being and a moral rhetoric that suggested a possible and desirable avenue of change. The same cannot be said of their successors. Perhaps the middle will not continue to decline and the dream of abundance can be rekindled. Modest reforms combined with corporatist planning may alleviate some of the most disruptive features of recent economic restructuring. On the other hand, this may not be enough to prevent a serious economic crisis. The shaky world economy, the international debt crisis, huge deficits, uneven domestic industrial sectors, and overextended consumers make a deep recession a possibility. The changing economic structure and declining abundance require much more rethinking of the relation between political economy and democracy than has been done so far.

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Notes and Commentary:

AIDS and The Politics of Morbidity

Robert D'Amico and A. Joseph Layon

If you have had your teeth cleaned in the last year you have noted one among many cultural responses to AIDS. Most dental hygienists now use rubber gloves and wear face masks while treating patients. Although occasionally ludicrous, as when New York policemen wore rubber gloves while arresting protestors, these precautions speak to the fact that AIDS has dramatically affected medical practice. The clinical setting and the economic future of hospitals are directly affected by this disease.

As though imitating the long history of epidemics, AIDS[1] has generated, alongside the above effects, distinct symbolic, emotional, psychological, and political expressions. The victims of the disease and the proponents for greater research funding often invoke dire images of conspiracies surrounding its outbreak, while equally deep psychological fears of contamination, early death, and punishment for sexual promiscuity flourish among the general population. In the midst of these syndromes of blame and victimization the disease has escalated what could be called "the politics of the marginalized."

The social study of medicine rests on there being a distinction between the biological and cultural dimensions of illness. Though these aspects are related, it is either the muddled identification of culture and biology, or the refusal to make the distinction at all, that must be analyzed within a historical theory of medicine. The point is not to take the side of one kind of medicine versus another, or to oppose medicine entirely but, rather, to understand how the experience of disease takes on meaning and becomes entangled in wider political struggles.

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1. AIDS, or the Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome, is better referred to as HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) Disease. The causative agent of AIDS, HIV, can result in a spectrum of complications ranging from a viral type syndrome early after infection to no symptoms of any kind in the intervening years until development of the complex disorders we now call AIDS. Through each of these stages, the individual infected with HIV is, even without symptoms, a carrier of the virus and capable of transmitting it by intimate contact or blood transfusion. But given the popular usage of the term we will continue, in this note, to refer to the disease as AIDS.

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In what is often taken as the founding of naturalistic medicine, Hippocrates is credited with showing that what ancient Greeks called "the sacred diseases," what we today assume was epilepsy, were not punishments for sin and transgression but wholly organic problems.[2] As Hippocrates may have been the first to realize, any illness, even a broken leg, can be given a non-medical interpretation and integrated into a logic of revenge, punishment or transgression. In other words, any causal processes within the body can take on cultural or social significance. Therefore, patients carry messages as well as microbes, and suffer from metaphors as well as physical pains.

But the potential for abusing illness relies precisely on the inherently conventional boundaries involved in the definition of disease. "Conventional" in this case refers to the "decisions" involved in defining the "space" in which a disease occurs and the nature of its causes. Consider, for example, being hit by a car. The fact that such injuries (usually internal injuries and often treated by a medical professional) are not considered the results of a disease, even though they are produced by natural causation, may lead one to conclude that a disease always refers to a cause or entity "inside" the body. But heart disease or radiation sickness, for example, do not fit such a model. The former is the result of both external (i.e., diet) and internal (i.e., genetic) causes and the latter is the result of external events much like the car accident. The idea of giving a privileged status to a disease entity "inside" the body is a metaphysical assumption about disease; it is neither a necessary classification nor dictated by nature.

Putting aside these speculations, the naturalistic solution to cultural superstition about disease rests on discovering a single internal causal agent for each disease. This has been the central paradigm of modern medicine. From this theoretical picture flows the popular image of "magic bullets" that destroy only the isolated and harmful entity and return the body, automatically, to health. Though there is truth to such causality in the study of selected disease processes, and specifically attempts to completely reduce medicine to a sociological or cultural phenomena, diseases, nevertheless, do require judgements or decisions which ultimately reflect cultural processes. These evaluations involve specifying the boundaries of a disease and its causation, but also concern the meaning of such terms as "health," "normality," and "natural states."[3]

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2. Hippocrates, "On Sacred Diseases" in *The Theory and Practice of Medicine* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1964). As Hippocrates introduces the problem: "It is thus with regard to the disease called Sacred: it appears to me to be nowise more divine or more sacred than other diseases, but has a natural cause from which it originates like other affections. Men regard its nature and cause as divine from ignorance and wonder, because it is not at all like other diseases." p. 347.

3. Our discussion has been influenced by R.M. Hare, "Medical Ethics: Can the Moral Philosopher Help?" in *Philosophy and Medicine* (Boston: Reidel, 1977) and is a defense of what he calls "prescriptivism" against what he calls the fallacy of descriptivism in Moral Thinking (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981).

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Contrary to accepted usage, the appeal to a body's "natural equilibrium," or "normal" function is not gained through observation. These judgements are prescriptions not descriptions, that is, they establish what is to be taken as the reference point for treatment and medical intervention.

Usually these judgements are invisible or uncontroversial because the assumptions about what is normal are fully shared by physician and patient. But imagining medical cures for homosexuality, schizophrenia, female hysteria, or depression is not uncontroversial. Certain assumptions are made about what constitutes the normal and natural state; assumptions open to challenge and struggle by various groups. Similarly, though it matters little whether being hit by a car is defined as a disease or not, as long as one is treated, it *is* significant whether pregnancy is defined as such. During treatment, the car accident victim, pregnant woman and heart patient may be indistinguishable, but the fact creates controversy. Being a patient is a specific and circumscribed social role, perhaps inappropriate for pregnancy or depression. What is important is that these issues cannot be naturalistically or descriptively resolved. There is no simple visual cue that tells us "this" is a disease, a natural function, or a social convention. For this reason diseases produce, along with their physical effects, what might be called symbolic or semiotic effects. Controversies emerge around the meaning of medical experiences and the cultural implications of being sick.

This "ambiguity of causation" extends not only into assumptions about the disease agent being inside the body, but also into what factors "outside" the patient's body are medically relevant. The highway system is not normally treated as a cause of illness but, as in cases of medical treatment of tuberculosis or salmonella poisoning, a city's system of public health and sanitation (or lack thereof) might be directly cited in medicine as causally related to the disease. The significance of this difference, which is political, historical and thus provisional, is that since tuberculosis and salmonellosis are transmitted by micro-organisms, then city expectoration ordinances and the sewage system become areas of medical concern. The highway system, however, is not a medical problem area since car accidents are confidently not classified as diseases. But many disease processes are not so neat. For example, recent concern about radiation from nuclear weapons and power stations have been taken by some to require a medical response and analysis.[4]

In *Birth of the Clinic*, Foucault pushed the idea of the conventional basis of illness farthest and suggested that the very relationship between diseases and bodies is historical. "The exact superposition of the 'body' of the disease and the body of the sick man is no more than a historical, temporary datum."[5] This enigmatic phrase seems to violate common sense because the presence

4. *Last Aid: The Medical Dimension of Nuclear War*, Eric Chivian, ed. (San Francisco: W.W. Freeman, 1982).

5. Michel Foucault, *Birth of the Clinic* (New York: Vintage Books, 1975), p. 3.

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of a disease in a body is usually treated as a constant against which history varies in the cultural and theoretical understanding of this fact. But Foucault's point, shared by many other historians of medicine, is that diseases are theoretically constructed entities and therefore the epistemological decisions that sustain the identity are historical, variable, and temporary.[6] Often the role of theory is ignored since the disease, as a conceptual object, is simply identified with nature. The dislocation between concept and object, however, reappears when we look back at the history of medicine or find ourselves in a debate about the treatment or status of a particular condition, such as schizophrenia or hyperactivity in children. In these cases the conceptual status of a disease is highlighted. The tendency to take theoretical decisions as "obvious" is countered in Lester King's *Medical Thinking*, when he demonstrates how effective and rational bloodletting was as a treatment.[7] It is an enlightenment myth that the history of medicine was a mere litany of human folly and blindness corrected, once and for all, by the modern empiricism about the human body.

AIDS was discovered by a literally ancient technique, the study of correlations. The fact that it was initially found in young, apparently healthy gay men in the US was used to pinpoint risk-factors and mode of transmission of the disease. The isolation of an infectious agent (HIV) came as a triumph of what Foucault called the "medical gaze," an empiricism trained to see by way of the case study, the dossier, and the laboratory. Why then, given this triumphant diagnostic accomplishment, is there so much anger and recrimination about the medical community's response to the disease? The gay community has repeatedly made the argument that the evidence of the epidemic has either been ignored or downplayed. But the heterosexual community now worries more about its suspectibility to AIDS than about the myriad other illnesses and infections that are more likely to afflict them. Can both of these groups be talking of the same phenomena?

The question of the real impact of AIDS cannot be settled in a brief note, nor can it be confidently predicted. In fact the issues are complex. Though it is understandable that the gay community wants increased funding and research, and therefore emphasizes a worst case scenario that gains media attention and provides raw material for the ever growing and trivializing discourse of talk-show journalism, the disease's economic and medical future is by no means obvious.

As epidemics go, AIDS has its pluses and minuses. On the plus side is the fact

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6. A good discussion of how perception changes in the history of medicine can be found in Jan Henrik van den Berg's comparison of anatomy drawings in the chapter "Vesalius and Vigevano" of *Medical Power and Medical Ethics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1978), pp. 67-85.

7. Lester King, *Medical Thinking: A Historical Preface* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), pp. 227-44. As King argues, the causes of disease "are conceptual entities, the products of reason, requiring mental activity for their creation and mental activity for their appreciation" p. 193.

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that it is apparently primarily transmitted by sexual contact and/or exchange of body fluids (i.e., blood). Though central to its symbolic and emotional status as a repressed fear of contamination and punishment for sin (obviously similar to the emotional discourse about syphilis),[8] sexual transmission is a limiting factor. Further HIV does not survive very long outside the body, making it difficult to transmit by other than intimate contact or blood transfusion. On the minus side, AIDS has a long period of latency in the body before it manifests itself through opportunistic infections; it may be a family of viruses; and it kills not directly but by intricate damage to the complex immune system. Given present knowledge of the details of the immune system, it is unlikely HIV will respond to one specific treatment. Probably humans will live with this virus, or a variant, well into the future. Its clinical manifestations will perhaps be managed more effectively, but not eliminated and, like cancer, remain a persistent cause of death.

Where do the ideological and political dimensions of this disease emerge? First, who is threatened by the disease? As probably most understand by now, there is nothing inherent in the disease that would restrict it to homosexuals or IV drug abusers, any more than syphilis, contrary to the forlorn hopes of its early victims, was restricted to the French. The disease is a natural process that, by chance and opportunity, initiated its spread among the gay and the IV drug-abusing populations. Since a major mode of transmission is sexual, it follows that many sexual partners (homosexual or heterosexual) increases susceptibility.[9] The disease has not spread into the general population at the rate which was initially feared. Though it is present in the population,[10] it is likely that education programs, at least among the middle class, will be effective. Since the gay community is largely well-educated and informed, we are left with IV drug abusers, the very poor, and the illiterate as the most likely sources for future uncontrolled spread. Although the death rates for those already infected will continue to climb, assuming that the blood supply can continue to be monitored and that the virus does not produce undetectable variations, an apocalyptic spread to the general population seems unlikely. But further inroads by the virus into promiscuous heterosexual populations is anticipated.

The next level of ideological or political struggle is within the medical profession and among patients. AIDS patients often suffer from multiple treatable complications though, if the disease is correctly understood, these patients will ultimately die of some opportunistic infection or cancer. Given this situation, some medical professionals have made the argument (although

8. Sander L. Gilman, "AIDS and Syphilis: The Iconography of Disease" *October* 4 (Winter, 1987), pp. 87-107.

9. M.J. Alter, J. Ahtone, I. Weisfuse, *et. al.*, "Hepatitus B Virus Transmission Between Heterosexuals," *Journal of the American Medical Association*, Vol. 256 (1986), pp. 1307-1310.

10. "Human T-lymphotropic virus type III/ lymphadenopathy-associated virus antibody prevalence in U.S. military recruit applicants," *Morbidity Mortality Weekly Report*, Vol. 35 (1986), p. 757.

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rarely publically) that it wastes the time of medical personnel and intensive care facilities to continually attempt to save doomed patients. Is treating a specific complication such as *Pneumocystis carinii* pneumonia (PCP) in an AIDS patient appropriate given the other demands on hospital facilities and the physician's time? Should other patients in effect be denied medical attention or care to extend the life of terminal AIDS patients?

At the level of patient care, AIDS carries with it the most powerful image of illness — contamination. There have been reports of AIDS patients' files being handled with tweezers. There continue to be those who refuse to treat patients with AIDS out of fear that they (the health workers) will be infected. The problem of contamination is a deep one in the history of medicine. In a famous case concerning the discovery of what was called "child bed fever," Ignatz Semmelweiss only realized that the disease was spread by infection and contamination after seeing a colleague die from the same symptoms as the pregnant women he treated.[11]

Reaction to this disease varies within the hierarchy of health care workers. Nurses and the interns who interact with AIDS patients on a daily basis deal with an individual dying of an incurable disease but with complications that respond to treatment, albeit requiring a good deal of care and complex medical intervention. The patients are often the same age as young residents and interns entailing obvious emotional and psychological stress.[12] Therefore, these health workers, in their intimate association with AIDS patients, may feel isolated and resentful. The more senior resident may begin to doubt his or her skills and knowledge because the patients do so poorly. On the other hand, medical researchers, who are often isolated from the day-to-day care of patients, are frequently excited and optimistic at the prospect of studying another AIDS patient.

This disease also heightens the notoriously difficult communication between physicians and patients. When it is discussed with them, AIDS patients do have preferences for treatment.[13] For instance, severe PCP, complicating the course of many AIDS patients, may require placement of a tracheal breathing tube and mechanical ventilation. Unfortunately these procedures

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11. A discussion of the Semmelweiss case and its implications for history of medicine can be found in Robert E. Weiss, "Semmelweiss," *Annals of Medical History* (1930), 2, pp. 80-88 and Steven Lehrer, *Explorers of the Body* (New York: Doubleday, 1979), pp. 97-113. There is also a famous discussion of the Semmelweiss discovery as exemplifying scientific practice in Carl Hempel, *Philosophy of Natural Science* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1966), pp. 3-18. Ironically, Semmelweiss also died of the same puerperal-type sepsis from an obstetric examination.

12. D.G. Ostrow, "Medical Responses to Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome" in Nichols and Ostrow, *Psychiatric Implications of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome* (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Press, 1984), pp. 93-103.

13. R. Steinbrook, B. Lo, J. Moulton, et. al., "Preferences of Homosexual Men with AIDS for Life-Sustaining Treatment," *New England Journal of Medicine*, vol. 314 (1986), pp. 457-60.

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have a reported survival rate of approximately 14%. When Steinbrook and colleagues questioned male outpatients with AIDS, most wanted hospitalization and antibiotic therapy for PCP, and about half would opt for ICU care (which included mechanical ventilation) and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), if it were necessary.[14] But when the patients were asked to consider the severe memory loss that often accompanies advanced stages of AIDS, in addition to severe PCP, those who wanted ICU care with intubation and CPR dropped to about 17%. Although about 70% wanted to discuss life-sustaining therapy with their physicians, only about 30% had done so.

Studies of non-AIDS patients have shown that about 20% of private attending physicians and 60% of house officers (interns and residents) *did not ask* ill individuals about their thoughts on CPR.[15] The point is that, while in approximately 50% of the cases the physicians had an opinion as to whether the patient would want CPR, they were correct in only about one half of their predictions. Thus, even with a group of patients suffering from ordinary, expected diseases, physicians often have either no interaction with the patients regarding their wishes for life-prolonging therapy, or assume, incorrectly, that they know the patient's wishes. Clearly this problem is not just a psychological or personal failing of individual physicians. These statistics indicate the peculiar limits and distortions endemic to the institutional structure and practice of modern clinical medicine in hospitals. Although this practice brings enormous benefits, it also entails a limited relationship between patient and physician that often complicates the issues concerning the evaluative dimension of disease.

Sontag's *Illness as Metaphor*, written well before awareness of the AIDS epidemic, raises similar issues in her discussion of tuberculosis and cancer.[16] Sontag considers the "punitive metaphors" surrounding these illnesses and the literary history of their representations. The metaphorical system surrounding TB emphasized the positive associations and images about the disease, whereas cancer was, and still is, conceptualized through terrifying and negative images. Her point is to oppose any mythology of disease and any attempt to convert and stigmatize a patient's suffering as a social, cultural message. Sontag is a Hippocratean.

Tuberculosis was both written about and imagined as a disease of a refined sensibility (it concerned the patient's breath or soul), affecting patients with sensitive feelings, youth, and loveliness, whose too exquisite character (so unsuited to this world) culminates in their being invalids or perpetual patients ending with a pain free, "literary" death. Of course, this picture is nonsense

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14. R. Steinbrook, B. Lo, J. Tirpack, et. al., "Ethical Dilemmas in Caring for Patients with the Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome" *Annals of Internal Medicine*, Vol. 103 (1985), pp. 787-90.

15. S.E. Bedell and T. L. Delbanco, "Choices About Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation in the Hospital. When do Physicians, Talk with Patients" *New England Journal of Medicine*, Vol. 310 (1984), pp. 1089-1093.

16. Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 1978).

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since death from tuberculosis can be bloody, terrifying, and hardly aesthetic. With cancer, however, the literary imagination puts total emphasis on its relentless destruction of the body. This invasive illness maims and then destroys the patient and "signifies," in the cultural mind, some deep, permanent "flaw" within its sufferer, culminating in a hard, punitive death. Sontag's point is that the evaluations are unimportant. Whether the illness is privileged and romanticized, as TB is in Mann's *Magic Mountain*, or made directly into an indictment of the patient's repressed personality, as in Wilhelm Reich's late, obsessed fantasies about cancer, the harm done to the patient resides in interpretation itself. It is the very existence of this cultural level of meaning about disease, rather than a specific set of images, which ultimately robs the patient of humanity and autonomy. Sontag treats the evaluative or prescriptive dimension of disease as necessarily illicit. For ethical reasons, she champions a completely naturalistic account.

For Sontag, all cultural mythologies instruct those who suffer mysterious illness that somehow, either for good or ill, *they* are the causes of their being "chosen" and in that way deserve their disease. Their disease, like their clothes, fits their life, values, and place within society. In other words, all and any biological fact, whether it is being sick or eating food, can become a meaningful or symbolic expression. Sontag has concluded that, because these cultural expressions can be "punitive," the answer is to deny that level, to think of diseases only as natural phenomena. Although Sontag is right in claiming that cultural interpretation of illness can be punitive and abusive, a completely naturalistic definition and classification of disease fails for reasons already given. Evaluative judgements are so central to medicine that a purely functional approach produces its own kind of harm.

Sontag's point, then, is the opposite of Foucault's in *The Birth of the Clinic*. Foucault criticizes the effort of modern medicine to escape metaphor through the construction of what he calls the professional "innocent gaze." Foucault's point is that such a "gaze" is itself a mythology, another metaphorical system. There is no antidote to the mistakes of the past because, Foucault argues, the "innocent eye" is precisely a metaphor for innoculating against error. For Foucault, experience is always prejudged by imagination and language itself. But both Foucault and Sontag are concerned with the political and moral impact of modern medicine on the fate of patients and their powerless status. Foucault locates the source of this assault on the ill in the creation of clinical medicine itself. The clinical model rests on the notion that diseases are not, as in the earlier classificatory model, autonomous natures or essences which just happen to locate themselves within the human body. Contrary to this older medicine in which diseases were classified as botanical species that flourish in certain natural environments, Foucault traces the rise and implications of a medical practice requiring controlled observation of patients in clinics. In this theoretical change, however, Foucault finds a new system of political and social

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power embedded in the clinic as an institution; a power which is epistemological long before it becomes sociological. "But to look in order to know, to show in order to teach, is not this a tacit form of violence, all the more abusive for its silence, upon a sick body that demands to be comforted, not displayed? Can pain be a spectacle?"[17]

These Foucaultian questions about the clinic's enlightened rationality end with his own image of the hospital as a "contract" in which the poor are treated in clinics so that the doctors can be educated and trained to treat the rich. "The most important moral problem raised by the idea of the clinic was the following: by what right can one transform into an object of clinical observation a patient whose poverty has compelled him to seek assistance at the hospital."[18] These brief hints at criticism by Foucault have been picked up, consciously or not, by many critics who have either reacted against modern medicine or analyzed it as a rise of professionalism and Weberian modernization.[19] Such arguments have entered directly into the mythology about AIDS, a situation all the more ironic since Foucault, that archivist of the cultural iconography of disease, was one of this new plague's early victims.

For Sontag, contrary to Foucault's suspicion of medicine's neutrality, the moral issue and possibility of harm resides not in the cool, collected treatment and surveillance of the clinic; the medical gaze holds, for Sontag, neither a hidden violence nor an unequal economic exchange. Sontag, on the contrary, wishes to extend and enlarge the very enlightenment of medical practice which Foucault sought to dismantle and weaken. She describes her book as wanting to liberate patients from these "lurid metaphors." She continues: "Cancer patients are lied to, not just because the disease is (or is thought to be) a death sentence, but because it is felt to be obscene — in the original meaning of that word: ill-omened, abominable, repugnant to the senses. Cardiac disease implies a weakness, trouble, failure that is mechanical; there is no disgrace, nothing of the taboo that once surrounded people afflicted with TB and still surrounds those who have cancer. The metaphors attached to TB and to cancer imply living processes of a particularly resonant and horrid kind."[20]

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17. Foucault, *op. cit.*, p. 83

18. *Ibid.*, p. 84

19. Ivan Illich, *Medical Nemesis: The Expropriation of Health* (New York: Pantheon, 1976) and Paul Starr, *The Transformation of American Medicine* (New York: Basic Books, 1982).

20. Sontag, *op. cit.*, p. 9. What Sontag is warning about has already happened with regard to AIDS. In the *Village Voice* of May 3, 1988, Michael Callen writes that gays who have not died of AIDS have personalities exhibiting assertiveness, a sense of responsibility, physical fitness, and political altruism. Callen concludes; "If I had to describe in one word the common characteristic . . . it would be grit." Not only is it interesting that Callen, in defense of the gay community, plugs into numerous American ideologies about self-autonomy, "true grit," and being a "fighter," but he seems oblivious to the fact that he is blaming patients who died of this disease for their weak characters. There is absolutely no evidence that this disease or any disease is cured by specific personality traits: anymore than a "macho" self-image saved the real John Wayne from lung cancer.

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What Sontag wants is the full rationalization of disease, its conversion entirely into a natural process. She wants to wipe out the level of cultural meanings, as vestiges of a pre-scientific mentality seeking in disease an answer to the question "why me?" Illness, Sontag concludes, should not be interpreted and evaluated, only treated. But she takes this position for moral not medical reasons. She takes it because of assumptions she makes about norms of health, autonomy, and nature. Sontag takes the position that diseases differentiate themselves from all other conditions of the body to the "eye" of an unbiased, neutral, and thus professional observer. But the understanding and classification of pregnancy, homosexuality, puberty, age, heart disease, or cancer are not descriptive problems alone, in which the purity of the eye is the central issue. Although the evaluative judgements which are necessary to constitute these objects of inquiry can be abused, as she documents, the abuse is not removed by assuming that diseases manifest a natural semiotics.

Sontag hopes to stop two kinds of hypothetical "spread" of the notion of illness. One is from illness to the moral or psychological character of the patient. With mysterious diseases, where random persons fall ill and cannot be cured, speculations arise about a psychological disposition, all the more damaging as it becomes more labyrinthian. With syphilis the character judgement was in some sense obvious, much like AIDS, but with TB the predisposition of character that was believed or imagined to produce the disease in one person, but not in another, was pushed deeper and made more esoteric. The second hypothetical spread that concerns Sontag is from illness of the body to metaphors for social issues such as criminality, government, or bureaucracy. For Sontag, there is a complex ecology here. The origin of the whole punitive system of notions about disease was a cultural invention and was meant, among other functions, to preserve and constrain nature within cultural meaning by blaming the victims for their personal suffering and continuing illness. But, at the same time, these deep images of illness and death seep back into the realm of culture, after acquiring a powerful material and vivid presence in illness, to reanimate the social imagination. Thus we are told that there is a "cancer on the Presidency," that the money supply has "hemorrhaged," or that a military defensive strategy is like the human body's own immune system; an immune system whose theoretical description, to begin with, was parasitical on metaphors of warfare and defense.

The problem for Sontag is that to prevent this double spread of metaphorics, this infection in the language about illness, and thus liberate patients from their metaphorical suffering and infirmity (as medicine cures their bodily suffering), she must take a stand not merely on the misuse of language but on medical theory. For Sontag the central theoretical question is whether a disease has a single discrete cause or multiple causes; that issue is central to metaphorical abuse. Thus it must be answered in advance, not by research, but by her anti-metaphorical pedagogy. Sontag must be on the side of what are

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called the mono-causationists, just as she must be on the side of the literal against the metaphorical in science.

That diseases have a single, discrete cause is a theoretical necessity for her position. For Sontag any indeterminacy about disease or causation generates irresponsible speculation. Thus she denies any role for convention in medical theory. The model for the abolition of disease is the story of TB. In the first chapter the disease is an ill-defined scourge extending from the body to the public health system. The invocation of multiple causes directs thought toward dangerous and punitive images of responsibility. The speculations concerning its mysterious spread and choice of victims leads to the "literary" crutch. The disease has no boundaries and so the patient's biography, psychology, and sociology become implicated and associated. As everything from bad air to bad housing is implicated, the cure slips farther into the impossibility of a massive social transformation.

This feverish crisis breaks when the agent of infection is isolated and named. Once the act of naming the agent of transmission occurs, the metaphor constructed around the disease's mystery collapse. Therefore, Sontag aligns herself with the assumption of mono-causation. "Indeed as Lewis Thomas has observed, all diseases for which the issue of causation has been settled, and which can be prevented and cured, have turned out to have a simple physical cause — like the pneumococcus for pneumonia, the tubercle bacillus for tuberculosis, a single vitamin deficiency for pellagra — and it is far from unlikely that something comparable will eventually be isolated for cancer. The notion that a disease can be explained only by a variety of causes is precisely characteristic of thinking about diseases whose causation is *not* understood. And it is diseases thought to be multi-determined (that is, mysterious) that have the widest possibilities as metaphors for what is felt to be socially or morally wrong."[21]

Unlike Sontag, some critics have attacked not medical theory, but the social structure in which medicine functions. As a recent example of this increasingly popular appeal, often leading to a defense of alternative medicines such as homeopathy, acupuncture, or chiropracty, Hunt in "AIDS and Capitalist Medicine" holds that AIDS was *caused* by modern medicine's economic, political, and theoretical character.[22] Hunt begins by arguing that the privatization of health care, under an ideology of individual responsibility for health, has produced delays in treatment and research, increased costs, and worsened the impact of the epidemic. He considers Reaganism a way to take the heat off the system by "justifying cutbacks in the name of individual life-style solutions to such problems as cancer and heart attack." He concludes that "the individualist ideology also led to initial attempts to define AIDS as a life-style-related disease."[23]

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21. Sontag, *op. cit.*, p. 61
22. Charles Hunt, "AIDS and Capitalist Medicine" *Monthly Review* (January 1988), pp. 11-25.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 15

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Hunt discusses this issue because AIDS patients find themselves grouped with those suffering from the medical complications of "high-risk behaviors." The idea here is not to deny such patients treatment but to hold that, for certain behaviors, such as heavy smoking, extreme physical or emotional stress, and perhaps sexual promiscuity, the solution is not a medical cure but a control over the activity. As the medical community decided that a "cure" for heart disease was farther off, with the failure of organ transplants and mechanical devices, the attention switched to changing behaviors that increased the likelihood of heart disease such as diet, exercise and stress. The argument was that, given relatively scarce resources, such strategies may be economically more viable than increased funding for a purely medical cure. Also, medical professionals now emphasize to the public that any "cure" involves complex side effects and unintended consequences; there are no magic bullets.

Hunt sees in this argument an ideological and conspiratorial effort to legitimate a cut-back in services and thus rationalize the late stages of monopoly capital break-down. Hunt, like Sontag, is suspicious of multi-causationists. But while Sontag opposes them in her confidence that all diseases have mono-causal treatments, Hunt's suspicions are more confusing and thus more revealing.

In his analysis of AIDS, Hunt attacks what he calls the general belief in medicine, and the culture as a whole, that there are "technical fixes." This belief is, he concludes not surprisingly, a result of capitalist ideology. For Hunt, at least at this point, the search for vaccines and "magic bullets" is a symptom of capitalism's efforts to conceal and repress the root social causes of illness. This would appear to be the multi-causationist position. But Hunt mocks attempts to redirect medical attention to diet and life-style as the ideology of individual responsibility. He grants that "the decline in mortality from infectious diseases seems to correspond to improvement in social and public health — improved nutrition and housing, clean water, and healthier environments in general."[24] But if he is correct, then the previously dismissed argument from multi-causation, i.e. "life-style," reappears. If diseases will resist the technical cure because they are embedded in social conditions then AIDS, for example, should be treated as a matter of social policy rather than pure medical practice or "cure." In other words, the disease should be seen as a social problem.

But Hunt follows his appeal to the inherently social character of disease and illness with the peculiar conclusion that educating the public about the risk factors of AIDS is another case of "individualistic ideology." His point apparently rests on a distinction between necessary and sufficient conditions. He says that advising people of the risk of any disease; "[A]voids the larger social question of poverty, poor health care, and inadequate distribution which makes an epidemic like AIDS more than merely an individual risk-avoidance responsibility. Risk avoidance education is necessary, of course, but hardly seems sufficient, just as the technological approach, the development of a vaccine,

24. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

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is a necessary but not sufficient approach. We need to combine many levels of approach, some of which must acknowledge a social and collective responsibility to not only solve the epidemic but also to eliminate the larger social condition which give such epidemics a foothold."[25]

Therefore, Hunt wants research for a cure, but also social welfare programs and health reform. Though most would agree with the hope that all these problems will be resolved, and few can resist condemning as a scandal that the US has no National Health Insurance, there is little evidence, aside from Hunt's assertion, that an epidemic like AIDS would have been materially different with a different health delivery system in the US, or that the cure of this disease will await the solution to such complex and debatable social problems. That people should not suffer and die from AIDS is not widely debated, but whether health care is best administered publically or privately remains a difficult question. Hunt may feel that those who hold to private distribution are fools and "running dogs," but the debate goes on. By tying that debate to the treatment of ill patients, he tries to shift the agreement from the one side, namely that medicine should treat these people, to the other side, that treatment should be socialized. Even ignoring that question, the epidemic was isolated by the Centers for Disease Control through tried and true research protocols and procedures that are quite independent of health care system organization. It would also be nice to have a better health care system or know what makes someone an IV drug abuser, but we would hate to think that the treatment of those with AIDS rides on such agreements within social theory and policy.

Hunt's position on AIDS and medicine is finally part of what he condemns as iatrogenic diseases. This term, borrowed from Ivan Illich's *Medical Nemesis*, means that modern medicine actually produces disease by its therapeutic techniques. Hunt cites the thalidomide cases, the 1976 swine flu inoculations, and the treatment of hemophiliacs with blood-derived Factor VIII. Before blood supplies could be screened for HIV, hemophiliacs were, in effect, playing Russian roulette every time they received a clotting factor transfusion. Hunt thus describes the spread of AIDS in this population as iatrogenic, because it was the result of modern medical treatment for hemophilia. But this argument is very peculiar. That the use of Factor VIII is "worse than the disease" reflects a shallow view of hemophilia. For patients who are at risk for bleeding episodes into joints and the head, the ability to function and prevent deformity is directly dependent on obtaining Factor VIII transfusions. There is a real necessity for this treatment, even given all the risks of transfusions, and to see this unfortunate delay in screening for the virus as a conspiratorial or institutional spread of the HIV virus is bizarre.

The fact, on the other hand, that there are side effects to any complex treatment is a recognition of the nature of reality and the human body, not an evil intention of what Hunt calls the "inhumanity of doctors." It is a dangerous

25. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

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fantasy to believe that some different health system will treat and cure people with no unintended side-effects or consequences.

Why does Hunt both call for a cure from the medical community (a cure he believes has been delayed and perhaps suppressed by that community) and, at the same time, argue that this same modern medicine causes disease and purveys ideological fixes? Hunt demands a cure and simultaneously treats seeking a cure as the ideology of the "technical fix." The answer could lie in the peculiar politics of AIDS.

Hunt wants AIDS patients to be seen as sick individuals who have a "right" to treatment. But since adequate treatment, other than for complications, does not exist, he does not want the disease to be seen as merely a problem of gays and IV drug abusers. Research funding would then be allocated, he fears, on the basis of a more limited potential threat, in just the way that research into lethal but rare disorders has a lower priority. But, at the same time, Hunt does not want AIDS to be merely a disease. In fact, it is a political struggle, otherwise, it would be classified among the mere "high-risk" behavior cases. In a reverse image of the religious fundamentalists, Hunt holds that AIDS is somehow the result of "rampant homophobia," an intensification of the crisis in the health care system and, perhaps, a complex plot to deprive citizens of civil liberties. "Much of the discussion of AIDS has been taken up by measures concerning mandatory testing and other legal/ethical issues of infectious disease control and public health. We must be concerned with these debates. United States history provides examples of the abuse or loss of civil liberties and rights in hysterical response to the spread of sexually transmitted diseases."[26] As Sontag warns, Hunt uses a medical problem as the pretext for connecting illness to the social issues of, in this case, monopoly capitalism's efforts to reduce costs in the reproduction of labor and oppose gay liberation. In Hunt's mythology, it is not the patient who is to blame, but the doctor and society. The logic of cultural meaning is, however, identical. Illnesses and epidemics are plots behind which one finds villains and heroes, good and bad guys.

The leftist or critical literature on medicine often reflects a schizophrenia about technology and modernization. In the post-WWII period, the positive assessment of science and technology that was central to classical Marxism was challenged. But that critique, in the hands of a critic like Maria Macciocchi in *Daily Life in Revolutionary China*, becomes a defense of dangerous and backward working conditions. Primitive health care is taken as a positive resistance to Western modernization. In other words, she defends production and conditions of life that, in any other context, she would condemn as exploitive. Recent reflections on modern medicine, as exemplified by Hunt, are a specific expression of these deep contradictions. A somewhat conspiratorial condemnation of modern medicine is followed immediately by demands for more success; thus both a critique of the inherent failures of technology and the

26. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

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the hope for salvation by it are combined in a single thought. Hunt wants science and technology to address why there is poverty before, or perhaps during, the assault on deadly diseases; otherwise all cures will be iatrogenic. It is revealing that the effort to approach medicine with theoretical analysis tends to recycle conspiracy theories, the inhumanity of doctors, and a Luddite-minded opposition to technology and pure research.

What transpires here is a common denominator behind Hunt and his opponents. The utopian idealism by which Hunt dreams of some more "natural" health care is similar to the general culture's confidence that expanding high-tech medicine will, in effect, "cure" every social ill. An historical study of the relationship between medicine and culture should not be an advocate for any particular medical treatment or direction. Rather it should expose and unravel the deep assumptions and images that haunt the history of the body. Medicine has always had a distinct function in culture. Today, fears about iatrogenic disease and the failures of modern medicine need to be read in their historical context. The sick human body does not need some new spiritual magic, but it does, as always, need something made by human beings, namely a certain kind of practice which, in part, constitutes what we mean by healthy, normal or natural. This practice is not the transcendent power of nature or technology, it is an historical attitude which rests on both knowledge and its application, on both that which is moral in its activity and that which is fallible in its knowledge.

Selectively Remembering the 1960s

Paul Gottfried

The 1960s are back in fashion, but in order to perform a dubious social function. Thus, in a recent anthology dealing with the cultural changes that occurred in that decade,[1] all contributors identified that period with a phenomenon Lionel Trilling designated as the "counterculture," characterized by promiscuous sex, psychedelic experience, and a defiant rejection of what were perceived as middle-class values. Some of the contributors documented their theses with extreme care: Stanley Rothman's article on the correlation

1. "The Sixties: Dreams and Illusions," in *The World and I* (August 1988), pp. 544-657.

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between radical students and the social alienation of upwardly mobile Jewish families from which many of them came, was rather persuasive. But the attempt to associate the 1960s exclusively or primarily with the counterculture has become a kind of self-serving cottage industry. The neoconservative John M. Olin and Bradley Foundations donated $300,000 last fall to bring former radicals together at a conference in Washington devoted to "second thoughts." Peter Collier, David Horowitz, and Jeffrey Herf were among the enthusiastic participants; though at least one speaker seemed insufficiently contrite about his past sins, most of the panelists obligingly fessed up. Plans for a second conference are now underway. A recently published book of essays, *Political Passages* (edited by John Bunzel), features more warnings against the counterculture by, among others, "second thought" participants. And a thematically related new collection of essays by Paul Hollander, *Survival of the Adversary Culture*, attacks academic radicals for trying to undermine American democracy. Hollander relates this war against democracy to a cultural upheaval beginning in the 1960s.

All these polemics give the impression that American society was advancing toward higher levels of democratic self-actualization until malodorous adolescents began to urinate on their professors rugs. This charge is always near the surface in Allan Bloom's lament for education as it was practiced in the good old days. The days Bloom has in mind do not go back to ancient Athens but, rather, to Chicago, Boston and New York from the late 1940s into the mid-1960s. In that setting, Cold War liberal professors enjoyed respect from docile students and awed university administrators. Without belaboring Bloom's idiosyncratic indictment of the 1960s, it is hard to believe that American higher education came apart because kids listened to rock and roll, read Max Weber and Friedrich Nietzsche, and, like Nietzsche, made the fateful judgment that Plato was a Greek rather than a universal man.

Many people, mostly conservatives, treat this dubious picture of historical causation with inappropriate reverence. They also resist any attempt to challenge it: for example, by pointing out that the Romans, even before Nietzsche and Woodstock, made culturally specific references to "Plato the Greek," or that admirers of Nietzsche and Weber who once listened to rock and roll could also be traditionalists and avid readers of classical Greek. Devotion to Bloom's diatribe, however, especially among the followers of William Bennett, has an ideological basis that goes beyond academic debate. Bloom can be used to justify the lives of conservative office-seekers who have been swarming in Washington since the early 1980s. Grouped around the Heritage Foundation, the National Endowment for Democracy, the American Enterprise Institute, and Georgetown's Institute for Strategic Studies, these recent converts to big government need a worldview that provides a *raison d'être* for their changing careers. The problem of self-justification in this case may be particularly acute, for conservatives now ensconced in Federal jobs, save for the neoconservatives, began as Wallace Democrats or as libertarian enemies of big government.

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For all their ranting against the counterculture, these ideologues have not come to abrogate the 1960s, but rather to fulfill them. Their newly acquired heroes are Martin Luther King, Bayard Rustin, Hubert Humphrey, and other Cold War liberals and 1960s social democrats. Under Bennett, the Department of Education has increased its staff by more than a third. Needless to say, both neoconservatives and former rightists have fared well in this situation of expanding government.

When an editor of the pro-administration *Human Events* was recently asked why Bennett remains a conservative hero and his predecessor, Terrence Bell, an object of conservative ridicule (though Bell reduced and Bennett increased the size of his department), the question was greeted with perplexity. Apparently Bennett, unlike Bell, believes in universal democratic values. He also understood the "Aristotelian implications" of Martin Luther Kings' protest against inequality. In point of fact, there is nothing conservative in democratic universalism, unless one assumes that Robespierre was the father of conservatism. Nor is there anything Aristotelian about the fusion of biblical cadences and the ideal of universal equality in King. But what is conservative in a peculiar way is the attempted repackaging of the major political social achievement of the 1980s: a massive managerial state that conservatives have learned can enrich them as much as it can Dukakis Democrats.

These seekers of federal largesse and political power must nonetheless distinguish themselves from their rivals, which they do in two ways. One, they continue to deploy Cold War liberal rhetoric (which is not the same as postwar conservative rhetoric) at a time when their rivals for power have embraced the language of social therapy (emphasizing "caring" and "compassion"). The Cold War liberal (now called conservative) office holders favor a vigorous foreign policy for turning the rest of the world into copies of American "democratic capitalism." They insist that they are not "negative" anti-communists, i.e., people pursuing limited national interests. They are crusading for democracy everywhere and are asking for public funds to realize their dream. Two, conservatives differentiate themselves from other state managers by decrying the 1960s. In these invectives, they conveniently link the established Washington crowd to the counterculture, which everyone is supposed to condemn.

An essay on this *tour de main* might be called "Having One's Cake and Eating It Too." The Reagan groupies are the present beneficiaries of the Great Society, holding and enjoying public jobs. They are also hoping to take over the civil rights movement through "moderate" black leaders under neoconservative control. Allan Keyes, whose senatorial campaign in Maryland is being run by the family of Irving Kristol, represents the type of black leadership that conservatives favor. The subdued civil rights movement does not attack the welfare state *per se*, and glorifies Martin Luther King, but also castigates Jesse Jackson for being too closely identified with the counterculture and the pro-Arab lobby.

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Like everything else conservatives and neoconservative theorists advocate, their own civil rights movement attempts to freeze interrelated historical changes at a point still favorable to their interests. Neoconservatives cried out in anger when their own managerial ideology fell under attack in the 1960s. But they have also seen power flow back from others into their own hands or into those of their lackeys. This they mistake for a long-term trend. But, as Samuel Francis notes, Kristol's "conservative welfare state" is a Fata Morgana, the interval of time during which more vigorous managerial forces regroup for further assaults on community, family and a by now vestigial bourgeois society.

Since May, *Commentary* magazine has lambasted Robert Nisbet and the authors of *The Conservative Movement*[2] for being unimpressed by the "Reagan Revolution" and for linking the Reagan presidency to the Carter presidency and ultimately to the problematic vision of Wilsonian democracy. Nisbet has explored the connection between Wilson's national bureaucratic state and the globalist and managerial themes in Reagan's speeches and among presidential spokesmen. He notes the fact that a presidency that once invoked 19th century American ideals has become the self-described vehicle for spreading Wilsonian doctrines. *Conservative* America, Nisbet fears, will henceforth be identified with a bureaucratic garrison state that struggles everywhere for the principle of Anglo-American democracy.

While Nisbet has been chided for finding too much continuity between modern American history and the Reagan administration,[3] the latter were chewed out earlier for finding too much of a nexus between left liberals and neoconservatives. In a stiffly worded tirade,[4] Himmelfarb, who is presumably a nephew of the *gran capofamiglia*, complains of the failure to recognize a single political tradition extending from Montesquieu, Madison, and Tocqueville to Martin Luther King and the *Commentary* circle. It is hard to imagine any cosmology that would unite all the presumed links in this Himmelfarbian tradition. And though ideas obviously influence society, it seems eventually clear that ideas are sometimes manufactured to justify the acquisition and exercise of power. From all appearances, the neoconservatives are putting together a hand to mouth ideology for legitimating their ascendancy in the managerial elite.

All their journalists, including Himmelfarb, point to a dramatic break in Western political development. This break allegedly occurred in the late 1960s, and is always made to seem at least as catastrophic as the Fall of Man in Christian theology. The neoconservative understanding of Western history is remarkably selective and marred by prejudices against Germans, Slavs, Christians and just about everyone (except for Jews) between Greek antiquity and the Renaissance.

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2. Paul Gottfried and Thomas Fleming, *The Conservative Movement* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1988).

3. Mary Tedeschi Eberstadt, "Robert Nisbet's America," in *Commentary* (August 1988), pp. 55-59.

4. Dan Himmelfarb, "Conservative Splits," in *Commentary* (May 1988), pp. 54-58.

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Pre-modern Western culture, starting with early Christianity, has been presented in *Commentary* as a seedbed for the Holocaust. The only bright spot in the neoconservative view of the world is the American regime in recent decades, save for the unpleasantness of the late 1960s. Neoconservatives always ascribe an exaggerated, cataclysmic importance to the shift of the Democratic Party from Humphrey liberals to McGovern "radicals." They relate this change to what for them was an equally unsettling development in the civil rights movement, the shift from the influence of Bayard Rustin and Martin Luther King to that of King's lieutenant, Jesse Jackson. But these changes are not truly significant. Where Himmelfarb and other neoconservatives see a break in the chain of being, there is in fact only a minor acceleration in the growth of postmodern managerial society.

The neoconservatives must be granted grudging respect. Unlike the ragamuffin army of one-note activists and grasping office-seekers that calls itself the New Right, neoconservatives are undertaking a serious task: constructing a hegemonic ideology for an alternative managerial elite when the liberal left loses control of the executive. So far a wide range of publications, from *The Washington Post* and *The New Republic* to *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Times* and *National Review*, have allowed representatives of this alternative managerial ideology almost free rein in their pages. Those who have criticized this ideology have not been able to present their views in the same publications. Given this growing access to the media and to foundation funds, it seems that Lipsett (in the Spring issue of *Society*) may be overestimating neoconservative fragility. Lipsett unconvincingly argues that neoconservative power will decline by the 1990s.

Far more likely is Lukacs' prediction that: "by the year 2000 Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Random House, Simon and Schuster, Guggenheim, and the Twentieth Century Fund will follow *The New Republic* and a number of foundations into the neoconservative camp."[5] This is plausible, but his reasoning is faulty. Neoconservatives will continue to exercise power, not because of a "bankrupt" liberalism, but because of their integral relation to the bureaucratic state. Neoconservatives have become the safe alternative to the predominant managerial elite; it is they who will look after the ship of state between periods of managerial accelerations. If late 17th century England organized a parliamentary monarchy around Whig and Tory squires, late 20th century America will see power contested and shared by two rival groups of managers and their defenders. Indeed, the 21st century may belong to those two groups, which by then will probably have become practically indistinguishable. Even so, they will continue to hold elections and give the public a "real choice" between global democrats and social therapists.

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5. John Lukacs, "The Reagan Administration: Bitter Afterthoughts," in *The World and I* (April 1988), p. 582.

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Management Crisis in the New Class

Emery M. Roe

In a recent article, Piccone discussed some of the emerging social conflicts between the New Class (the technocratic-bureaucratic managerial elite) and the people it is supposed to manage.[1] He neglected to mention, however, the emerging conflicts within this elite. In particular, the New Class manages an administrative state which is becoming increasingly difficult to manage. In brief, the US government is over-administered, but under-managed. Its senior- and middle-level management is over-stretched because of the libraries of rule and regulation it is meant to administer.[2] Management of the government bureaucracy has become increasingly problematic, especially where management has not expanded as fast as the rules and regulations to be administered.[3] In order to draw out this point more clearly, the US situation will be contrasted to ostensibly similar over- and underregulation in the so-called Third World. What is happening in the US frequently looks like a replay of the problems of developing countries, including poor roads, lousy bank service, debtor nation status, bureaucratic red tape and boom and bust government. Overregulation and underregulation are, however, realized differently in many parts of the Third World and the differences point to why it is not

1. Paul Piccone, "The Crisis of American Conservatism," in *Telos* 74 (Winter, 1987/88), p. 7.

2. For example, when a government agency is required by increasing legislation to regulate more hazards, fewer are actually regulated. For a discussion of this problem as it affects one federal agency, see John Mendeloff, *The Dilemma of Toxic Substance Regulation: How Overregulation Causes Underregulation at OSHA* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988).

3. US local governments alone witnessed more than 3,300 changes in activities and structure each year between 1942 and 1977. Yet public sector employment in the US remained virtually constant as a percentage of the overall labor force for much of that period. See Thomas Anton, "The Political Economy of Local Government Reform," in *The Dynamics of Institutional Change: Local Government Reorganization in Western Democracies*, Bruno Dente and Francesco Kjellberg, eds. (London: Sage Publications, 1988) and B. Guy Peters, "The United States: Absolute Change and Relative Stability," in *Public Employment in Western Nations*, Richard Rose, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

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possible to resolve the management crisis within the government's techno-bureaucratic managerial elite. There is no happy mean between administration and management. Over- and underregulation are found in governments young and old, with widely different development ideologies. It should go without saying, however, that the broad trends described here do not apply to all levels of government everywhere and at all times.

The relation between management and administration has often been held by organizational designers to be inverse: if too few bureaucratic rules and procedures exist, then throw more managers at the problem or give existing management broader problem-solving powers. Conversely, one of the perceived benefits of bureaucratization is that increasingly rule-governed administration should reduce the need for managers having wide discretionary responsibilities. In practice, this has not been the case. Consider the experience of superintendents of public education in some large US states. Legislative micro-management of their activities has become much more common, with a few aggressive, often full-time lawmakers passing bills that tell superintendents what to teach, when, where and how it should be taught, how many credits to assign, and what the specific criteria are for evaluating this instruction. The legislators in question typically justify their intervention on the grounds that management and administration are exchangeable: what is perceived to be bureaucratic under-administration by the state agency has to be compensated for by more hands-on legislative interventions.

Unfortunately, the consequences of this sort of micro-management by legislators are at times less laudatory than their causes. As the number of legislatively mandated activities increases faster than the size of the staff administering them, officials end up believing that they are under-managing from the inside an increasingly bureaucraticized administration over-managed from the outside. This, in turn, promotes a profoundly conservative ideology among government managers. Agency managers frequently feel compelled to spend considerable time justifying why outside micro-management is unnecessary. From the perspective of agency managers, just maintaining the agency's *status quo* can and does look like winning. Nor are over-stretched senior and middle-level managers, who see themselves as the preservers of their departmental missions, just a problem of some large states.

If US government officials frequently see under-management and over-bureaucratization because of legislative interference from outside their departments, the reverse can be found in some so-called lesser-developed countries: civil servants there are more likely to perceive their governments as internally over-managed and under-administered because of being over-administered from without by foreign and international agencies. Consider the predicament of some Subsaharan governments. Their post-colonial bureaucratic structure is fairly new and under-bureaucratized relative to the ambitious development

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agenda frequently pursued after Independence.[4] In the face of this relative dearth (but by no means absence) of administrative procedures and regulations, these governments seem to have moved along the management/administration trade-off, but in a different direction than their US counterparts. In this case, more management, particularly expatriate advisors, short-term consultants and other donor technical assistance personnel, is used to compensate for the shortfall in administration. In countries such as Kenya or Botswana, expatriate technical advisors fill middle-to-senior level management positions needed to implement their development agenda.

The need for more managers, however, is frequently a direct function of the increased demands the major foreign donors and lenders place on the country in return for funding project development and budget support. These institutions are highly bureaucratized and rule-bound (e.g., the Rome headquarters of FAO is notorious for its high administrative overhead and red tape). Unlike the legislator who provokes a US government agency, it is considerably less easy to individuate the administration of donors and lenders like the World Bank, US Agency for International Development and the International Monetary Fund. Trying to find out just who in these organizations is responsible borders on the Kafkaesque. Yet these institutions generate enormous paperwork requirements for the recipient governments, causing their management needs to increase accordingly. The acquisition of more and more management talent, however, has two perverse consequences: it reinforces the relatively low bureaucratization of these governments by lessening the pressure to increase rule-governed administration from within; at the same time, it reinforces over-bureaucratization of the major lending institutions, since the problems the management of developing countries generates for these institutions are now perceived to be four or more managers "deep." Thus, unusual agreement often exists between senior donor officials and junior or lower civil servants of developing countries who both complain about how "personalized" and *ad hoc* the senior- and middle-level decision-making process is in these governments and how there should be one set of administrative rules to govern the lending cycle.

Whether the problem is over-managed under-administration (i.e. too many managers and too few rules) in some of the developing nations or the reversed situation in the US, the consequences are the same. Nothing government does seems to work as planned. One of the most thoughtful reviews of major donor-funded, government-sponsored development activities in the Third World concludes that "study after study shows the same kinds of failures recur in country after country, year after year."[5] "The key lesson," according to a review

4. David Leonard discusses underbureaucratization in his *Reaching the Peasant Farmer: Organization Theory and Practice in Kenya* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977 [Midway Reprint, 1985]), pp. 217-223.

5. Bruce Johnston and William Clark, *Redesigning Rural Development: A Strategic Perspective* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), p. 9.

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of recent decades of major social science evaluation in the US, "is that the expected effects of [US] social programs hover near zero."[6] Indeed, the last decade and a half has witnessed the rise of a new field, called "implementation analysis," which documents in depressing detail why so few important programs that governments worldwide propose are ever begun; or if begun, completed; or if completed, finalized as planned.[7] While such widespread negative findings from program and project studies have something to do with the way social science evaluations are carried out, these results are just too dismal and consistent across different developmental programs to conclude that these failures are an artifact of evaluation methodology and negative social science alone.[8]

In short, the techno-bureaucratic managerial elites across many parts of the world cannot manage and cannot administer, at least as well as they would like. This is true whatever the objectives that are being pursued by that management and administration. Thus, implementation analysts are often skeptical of those who argue that elites manage complex bureaucracies to advance their own personal or class interests. To understand how elites are nonetheless able to promote such interests, though in a vastly more circumscribed manner than is popularly thought, requires first understanding how the US problem of under-managed over-administration and its reverse in the Third World differ.

Over-management and under-administration in the Third World can be illustrated by a specific example from Kenya.[9] During the quarter century of independence, the government of Kenya has repeatedly found that specific programs, institutions and policies perform differently at local, district, or national levels. Programs and projects are the primary mechanism the government uses to manage and administer rural development in the countryside and they have been found to work best, if they work at all, at the local level. Such development

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6. Peter Rossi and James Wright, "Evaluation Research: An Assessment," in *The Annual Review of Sociology* (Volume 10, 1984), p. 331.

7. For what remains the best introduction to implementation analysis in the US, see Jeffrey Pressman and Aaron Wildavsky, *Implementation*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984). An extremely thorough review of Third World development literature, from an implementation analysis perspective, can be found in Jon Moris, *Managing Induced Rural Development* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1981).

8. The joke goes like this. "Q: What is the difference between the New Deal and the Great Society? A: The Great Society was evaluated." Why many social scientists are predisposed to find program and project failure has been described, at times in remarkably similar terms, for the US by Henry Aaron, *Politics and the Professors: The Great Society in Perspective* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1978) and for the Third World by Robert Chambers, *Rural Development: Putting the Last First* (London: Longman, 1983).

9. For more details on this example, see "Development in the Arid and Semi-Arid Areas of Kenya," a report prepared for a workshop requested by the Government of Kenya, (Ithaca: Institute for African Development/ Cornell University, 1988).

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programs, however, are frequently unable to radically transform the local production system into a high performing one (this holds true whether "high performance" is defined by peasants or elites). Thus, local development programs (e.g., soil and water conservation activities and small-scale water supplies) can sometimes move low-performance production systems to medium levels of performance (a not-insignificant feat), but these local programs work better at the farm level than for larger local entities such as villages.

In contrast, the administrative apparatus of government institutions works best at the district and national levels (government offices and officials are not found in a number of the more remote localities of the country). Government institutions, though, are unable to perform efficiently on a large scale by administrative rules and procedures alone. Better policies are required to supplement institutional activities, particularly if substantial production increases are to be realized: for example, improved performance of national research institutes will only expand agricultural production to a certain point; thereafter, a policy of raising crop and livestock prices will likely be needed to increase aggregate production further. In other words, even mediocre government agencies can sometimes improve their performance considerably at the national level by deploying a range of policies to compensate for their institutional limitations. But the ability of national policy management to realize high productivity increases becomes more and more attenuated as one moves to the subnational level. Government penetration is weak or non-existent in some areas, and national policies are notoriously unwieldy instruments if the aim is to earmark high performance only to specific localities or farms. The problem, at least from the perspective of the government of Kenya, is that these three instruments of management and administration leave behind a *missing middle*, where the combination of policies, institutions and programs have little effect in improving the performance levels of some production systems. The missing middle is not limited to Kenya and can be found in much of the Third World rural development literature as well. For example, about the only substantive thing this literature has found worth recommending to districts and regions wishing to improve the performance of their production systems, is that they should decentralize into smaller, farm/village cooperative systems or centralize into larger, national ones.

Contrast this situation of the missing middle to what is found in the US. Here we have a *congested core*, where infighting over every major public issue threatens to involve overlapping city, county, state and federal jurisdictions. Rarely do these parties aspire to perform beyond the lowest common denominator on any issue, while beyond them are the margins they have impoverished: local neighborhoods and communities so atomized that they exist in name only, some institutions in government so bureaucratized as to be dead to real change, and governmental policies so palpably a matter of public relations that the public stands to them as brillo pads do to the Andy Warhol

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painting. City councilors, county supervisors, state legislators, and congressional lawmakers are papering the bureaucracy with layer after layer of micromanaged regulation at these margins.

The implications to be drawn from these polar ideal types of under-managed over-administration and over-managed under-administration are several. First, there is no direct passage from missing middle to congested core: no Weberian myth of the increasing efficacy of bureaucratization will render over time the proper balance of management and administration. Second, whatever caused different governments to be poised on the endpoints they now find themselves, the spatial consequences of their being there are similar: a management crisis at the middle- and senior-levels exists in governments across the world and it has taken several forms. In Africa, government reliance on expatriate advisors and consultants to fill in for needed management staff has reinforced the impression of rampant neocolonialism. Similarly, US government reliance on military staff, particularly for senior White House and Congressional staff positions otherwise left unfilled, has reinforced the impression of the increased militarization of federal decisionmaking. On closer inspection, though, such "temporary managers" look less like mandarin advisors or nascent juntas than the common garden variety bureaucrats who end up underregulating because they see themselves as overregulated.[10]

The techno-bureaucratic managerial elite is, however, not without means to advance its own interests. What middle- and senior-level managers cannot achieve because of their management crisis is, nonetheless, attained through the boom and bust cycles endemic to governments globally. The ability of elite officialdom to manipulate the flow of funds may be marginal, but when the money increases exponentially as it does in some booms, marginal can look decidedly unmarginal. When the US Defense Department undergoes the kind of boom period as it did during the Reagan reign, even the most remote cog in the military-industrial complex gets oiled fairly well, as the latest round of defense contract scandals demonstrates. In bust periods, the elite tries to protect its interests by shifting budget cuts to more vulnerable areas but, on the whole, a great deal of what the elite gains by being an elite comes from being in the right place when the booms come along. Indeed, the inability of the techno-bureaucratic managerial elite to fine-tune economic activities for its own class interests is offset by the high probability that it benefits disproportionately from the booms and busts that the very absence of such Keynesian management created.

Finally, is there a way out of this impasse of over- and underregulation? Even if it were possible to alchemize the missing middle and congested core

10. For a discussion of the similar activities and functions undertaken by expatriate managers in Africa and some of their counterparts in the US government, see Emery Roe, "The Expatriate Advisor as Senior Policy Analyst," in *Policy Studies Review* Vol. 7, No. 3 (Spring 1988).

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into a golden mean of government management and administration, its realization would still be highly unlikely: access to elite senior- and middle-level positions in government has always been restricted, and the skewed distribution of income in the US economy is growing. A less exasperating way to approach the problem, however, is to first ask under what conditions would this impasse be precisely the outcome to be desired. What state of affairs would have to exist in order to conclude that this mix of high and low management and administration is really, if not ideal, at least the next best alternative? People who believe, as a matter of principle or expediency, that certain kinds of local mobilization and self help are to be preferred over government interventions provide a case in point. They may want government to be ineffective in administering some areas of the public and private spheres, not because of some hostility towards government on their part, but from a conviction that government has no rights or claims in these areas. Others additionally feel that it is better to provide a service collectively than wait for the government to provide it at the levels or in the form desired.

Such local management can be found across the US, particularly at the margins of the congested core. Some of it looks like breaking laws that are currently enforced, when in fact these laws are being collectively rewritten. For example, taking cash or services in kind as payment for services is an increasingly common practice throughout the country. Some local management reflects the co-existence of plural bodies of law that may or may not conflict. Residents living adjacent to national forests, for instance, have been found to claim long-standing customary rights to firewood and livelihoods from these public lands.[11] Such local management efforts constitute the rise in the US of what some Central and East European critics have found in their own countries and called variously "the parallel polis," the second economy, the second society or the self-organized society.[12]

The notion of a parallel polis can easily collapse into a hodge-podge category that is the all-embracing negative of government: it is everything outside the government sector. Not planned by government, it is more informal and only marginally integrated with the dominant form of ownership or management; it is less hierarchical and less visible in the sense of producing incomes that are only partially, if at all, taxed by government. As such, the government

11. See Louise Fortmann, "Locality and Custom: Rural Protest and Non-Aboriginal Claims to Customary Usufructuary Rights," unpublished manuscript (Berkeley: Department of Forestry and Resource Management, University of California, 1988). Fortmann's work provides the framework and current case material to explain how claims to customary rights over natural resources have arisen in areas other than those conventionally associated with having these rights, such as Native American reservations. There she also develops the concept of the "missing middle."

12. A discussion of such parallel socioeconomic structures can be found in a number of articles on recent research in Central and East Europe in *Social Research*, Vol. 55, Nos. 1-2 (Spring/Summer 1988).

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sector often views it as illegitimate.[13] The anti-government, anti-totalitarian sentiment is particularly strong in Eastern and Central European descriptions of the origins of the parallel polis: "Independent activity began in spontaneous acts of mutual self-defense in different parts of society. Those who take part are active people who can no longer stand to look passively at the general decay, marasmus, rigidity, bureaucracy, and suffocation of every living idea or sign of movement in the official sphere."[14] The problem of how to adapt such East European critiques to other settings has already been discussed extensively.[15] Other research efforts, while considerably less anti-government and negative in orientation, support the notion that local management efforts arise in response to some of the conditions that follow from the management crisis within the techno-bureaucratic managerial elite.

There is nothing metaphysical about the principles of this local management, which have more to do with economics than with a putative resurgence of some long-lost "community spirit." Its chief features are the same whether local people are managing their grazing commons in parts of Kenya, coastal fisheries in parts of Brazil, small-scale irrigation in parts of India, or responses to street crime in parts of the US.[16] Local management frequently occurs when at least five factors exist: 1) Local management is more likely to take place over small geographic areas; 2) The location of the most intensive efforts at local management is often centered around the point where the resource in question becomes personal property; 3) Under local management, it is difficult to separate resource managers from resource users, i.e., how people use the resource is the way they manage it; 4) Local management occurs in the

13. Elemér Hankiss, "The Second Society: Is There an Alternative Social Model Emerging in Contemporary Hungary?," in *Social Research*, Vol. 55, Nos. 1-2 (Spring/Summer 1988), pp. 18, 35.

14. A comment made by Ivan Jirous in "Parallel Polis, or an Independent Society in Central and Eastern Europe: An Inquiry," in *Social Research*, Vol. 55, Nos. 1-2 (Spring/Summer, 1988), p. 228.

15. See the articles by Paul Piccone and Paul Breines in *Telos* 75 (Spring 1988).

16. For 20 case studies on fairly current local resource management covering 15 countries and five different resource regimes (water, fish and wildlife, agricultural land, range and pasture, and forests), see the National Academy of Science's Panel on Common Property Resource Management, *Proceedings of the Conference on Common Property Resource Management* (Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1986). Major features of such local management are described in Elinor Ostrom's "Issues of Definition and Theory: Some Conclusions and Hypotheses" in the *Proceedings*. The five management features described in this note have been proposed as the basis for re-designing livestock rangeland projects in Africa and livestock sector policy in at least one subsaharan country: See Emery Roe, "Last Chance at the African Kraal: Reviving Livestock Projects in Africa," in *Proceedings of the 1987 International Rangeland Development Symposium* (Winrock International, Morrilton, AR); and *The Second-Generation Strategy for the Development of Kenya's Arid and Semi-Arid Lands*, A consultancy report prepared for Kenya's Ministry of Planning and National Development on behalf of the International Fund for Agricultural Development, Nairobi, Kenya.

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middle-ground set by relative resource scarcity, namely, when the resource is neither too abundant nor too limited relative to demand; and 5) The middle-ground character of local management provides just enough pressure to keep conflicts and disputes over such resources immanent, but not enough pressure to do away with the need for conflict management over who are "insiders" and "outsiders" to the local management.

Such factors can be found, for example, in people's mobilization against crime in some US localities. Local residents are more willing and better able to protect their apartment than the floor of the building they live on, the floor better than the building, the building better than the block, and so on. They may employ police and private guards to better secure them from crime, but on the whole the way residents use their premises is the way they are managed against crime: do not close the apartment door without securing it; do not open the front entrance without confirming the caller; do not look out the window without taking in what is happening on adjacent premises, and so on. Such local management, however, is less likely to occur at the extremes, that is, when crime or the fear of crime is so extreme that residents move, or are so negligible as not to warrant management in the first place. Last, but not least, the ability to locally manage premises stands or falls on the often difficult determination of who are insiders having access to the managed area versus those who are outsiders having more limited or no access to it. For example, residents may be much less disturbed with car vandalism in their area, when the vehicles at issue are those of outsiders, such as daily commuters who park on local streets in order to catch public transport into the city. The co-existence of these conditions, in turn, follows from the willingness and ability of officials at the city, county, state and federal levels to cooperate in controlling crime such that local residents do not need to do it for themselves. The distortion and attenuation of that control is one of the major symptoms of the management crisis in government's techno-bureaucratic managerial elite.[17]

Similar conditions can be found when local residents take the aforementioned liberty with adjacent forest firewood. They assert their right to do so without, however, claiming that outsiders (including in some cases government) have the same perogative. Such instances of local resource management — and they are myriad in everyday life in the US — represent a growing civic organization of the periphery that is in part parallel to, rather than is independent of or autonomous from, civic activities of multiple, overlapping jurisdictions.

From the perspective of those who do not want, or trust, government to provide local services, the management crisis of the New Class looks less as an impasse than an opportunity for local empowerment. One does not need reports of urban vigilantism and cooptation of this empowerment by local elites to

17. For a good introduction to residential responses to crime, see Albert J. Reiss, Jr. and Michael Tonry, eds., *Communities and Crime* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

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appreciate that empowerment is sometimes greeted with mixed feelings, even locally. After all, if resources are not managed locally unless they come under stress, then we enter the perverse world where, e.g., drought is needed in order to encourage local water management and where some crime has to exist if there is to be local mobilization against it. Such complaints, however, beg the question. Droughts in the US, like crime and other hazards, are all-too-frequently the cumulative consequences of layer after layer of government policies, agencies, and programs that only partly succeed in regulating local behavior so as to mitigate the effects of that hazard. If this is correct, then the "real" management crisis confronting the techno-bureaucratic managerial elite is not that overregulation leads to underregulation, but that the latter is the occasion for another form of "regulation" altogether.

Wishing For More

David Pan

The first question which comes to mind in reading Ellis' bestseller, *Less Than Zero*, is "Is Los Angeles really like that?" This astonishment betrays not only the vague feeling that one has somehow missed out on all the action in Los Angeles, but also the compulsion to continue reading in order to experience, at least vicariously, all the sordid details of life in the American "elite." This voyeuristic query fits perfectly into the framework of a book in which the closest thing to a plot is the attempt of Clay, the first person narrator, "to see the worst" and in which the characters continually try to certify the authenticity of their experiences. After watching a snuff film, the characters voice the same concern as the readers':

" 'Yeah, I think it's real too,' the other boy says, easing himself into the jacuzzi. 'It's gotta be.'

'Yeah?' Trent asks, a little hopefully.

'I mean, like how can you fake a castration? They cut the balls off that guy real slowly. You can't fake that,' the boy says."[1]

The voyeuristic impulse which grips the snuff film viewers and forces the

1. Bret Easton Ellis, *Less Than Zero* (New York: Penguin Books, 1986), p. 154.

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question, "Is it real?" is the same impulse which propelled *Less Than Zero* to its bestseller status, fueling suspicions of its essentially trashy novel character. But the question "Is it real?" in addition to revealing the voyeuristic stance of the questioner, also expresses a certain incredulity that the scenes depicted might not be fiction, but reality. *Less Than Zero* might really be a journalistic account. Either way, both the pulp fiction and journalistic qualities of the book tend to disqualify it from being real "literature." Yet, even though it has succeeded as a pulp novel and has become, in its abysmal Hollywood filming, a piece of journalistic evidence for crusaders in the war on drugs, it is clear that *Less Than Zero* is not just pulp fiction or journalism. It is also a critique. Whether this critique is successful hinges on the question constantly haunting critics of culture of how to criticize the banal without becoming it. For the primary reason for studying the products of mass culture is their popularity, and to the extent that critics do not share the enthusiasm of the populace, they are also excluded from a true understanding of the influence and significance of mass culture. The successful critic must both identify with the duped cultural consumer and also maintain a reflective stance. Though unable to achieve a satisfactory solution, *Less Than Zero* does make the attempt.

In the novel, the first person narrator, Clay, continuously high on drugs, alcohol or both, wanders from nightclub to nightclub and party to party, mingling with "blond-haired pretty male models," standing mesmerized before video screens, and sleeping with most anybody, male or female, who seems to take a passing interest in him. He is less a character than a spectator of all that happens to him, passively and indifferently accepting everything around him as if he were watching it on TV. The prose style underlines Clay's virtual lack of individual identity. Though Clay is the first person narrator throughout the novel, his consciousness is at times so inobtrusive that most passages read as if written in the third person.[2] That the reader loses track of the first person narrator in the midst of the action does not merely demonstrate the unreflecting mentality of "Clay" who, presumably faithful to the name, compliantly accepts any situation he happens to find himself in. The indifferent flow of images and events resembles the stream of flat images seen on television. Ellis' prose shares television's drive to continually change the image, to relentlessly keep up the pace of the action, a drive which ultimately debases the image

2. "In the car, Spin tastes the coke and says that it's cut with too much novocaine. Rip says that at this point he doesn't care and that he just wants to do some. Rip turns the radio up and keeps screaming happily 'What's gonna happen to all of us?' And Spin keeps screaming back, 'All of who, dude? All of who?' We do some of the coke and then go to an arcade in Westwood and play video games for close to two hours and end up spending something like twenty bucks apiece and we stop playing only because we run out of quarters. Rip only has one-hundred-dollar bills on him and the arcade won't give him change. So Rip stuffs the bills back into his pocket and yells fuck off to the guy working at the change booth and the three of us go back to his car and finish the rest of the coke." *Ibid.*, p. 128.

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and trivializes the action. Clay's own identity and consciousness is replaced by the string of events which, like the video images before his eyes, he seems to have no control over, and which in the end perhaps entertain for a while, but can never really satisfy. Accordingly, Clay's displays of discontent correspond to the sort of dazed and disgusted feeling one has after having sat in front of the television until three in the morning, and which, if one is like Clay, can quickly be remedied by taking another Valium.

Yet, Clay is not always a passive observer without a conscious perspective of his own. In sharp contrast to this virtual absence of consciousness, Clay at other times demonstrates the same ironic distance which Ellis himself expresses in describing his peers at Bennington College.[3] This attitude becomes obvious in passages where the ironic tone is unmistakable, but at the same time, entirely incompatible with the passive attitude which Clay otherwise displays.[4] Sensing that his MTV prose style threatens to become as banal as MTV itself, Ellis attempts to use such ironic passages to make Clay into a critic. Not only is Clay the example of the passive television viewer who lives his life like he watches a video, he is also the critic of this same attitude, ironically describing the teenagers bathed in images. By combining both perspectives in one character, Ellis attempts an "immanent" critique of mass culture, i.e., from the "inside." This "insider," however, has an implausibly schizophrenic consciousness. Clay as the passive spectator accepts his surroundings as real and submits to their logic, no matter how artificial, distorted, or manipulative. Clay as critic takes the exact opposite tack by completely rejecting through irony the very same object which the spectator so uncritically accepts. Ellis' depiction of Clay as a totally passive media construct takes the logic of the spectator too seriously by denying Clay the participation and feeling which the culture industry manipulates, but never completely eliminates. On the other hand, Clay's rejection of the media world is a failure to take it seriously. The rejection is too facile, as if his critical self could simply erase his voyeuristic self without a trace and his return to an Eastern college at the end of the book could leave "LA decadence" far behind.

Finally, *Less Than Zero*'s deadpan, state-of-the-art "MTV" prose demonstrates a problem which is shared by a specific sector of 1980s American culture, the David Byrne mixture of parody and hip cynicism. A conversation in *Less Than Zero* illustrates the problem:

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3. Bret Easton Ellis, "Down and Out at Bennington College" in *Rolling Stone* (Sept. 26, 1985).

4. "I sat in my room a lot, the week before I left, watching a television show that was on in the afternoons and that played videos while a DJ from a local rock station introduced the clips. There would be about a hundred teenagers dancing in front of a huge screen on which the videos were played; the images dwarfing the teenagers — and I would recognize people whom I had seen at clubs, dancing on the show, smiling for the cameras, and then turning and looking up to the lighted, monolithic screen that was flashing the images at them. Some of them would mouth the words to the song that was being played. But I'd concentrate on the teenagers who had forgotten them; the teenagers who maybe never knew them." *Less Than Zero, op. cit.*, pp. 193-4.

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" 'Yeah, *Beastman!* that was pretty good,' the film student says to me. 'See it?'

I nod, looking over at Blair. I didn't like *Beastman!* and I ask the film student, 'Didn't it bother you the way they just kept dropping characters out of the film for no reason at all?'

The film student pauses and says, 'Kind of, but that happens in real life. . .' "[5]

A characteristic of the film which would normally be considered "bad art" acquires new meaning because it turns out to be a characteristic of "bad reality." But whether the film reproduces bad reality because it is simply unconscious of its inadequacy or it is actually trying to parody reality, the film, as well as *Less Than Zero* itself, falls prey to the same problem. In either case, the resort to a reproduction of clichés in reality demonstrates both a lack of inventiveness and a fascination with the inane which numbs one's sense for the healthy. For even as parody, such a film would contribute to the omnipresence of that which it should resist by failing in its representation of reality to present positive aspects and alternatives within the dominant order. As much as the present media environment might testify to the contrary, reality is not merely "less than zero." Positive elements exist as well, both in reality and as not yet fulfilled possibilities. *Less Than Zero*'s suppression of those elements is a capitulation before the media's depiction.

Though he never gets beyond a clichéd description of the two extremes of voyeur and critic and his attempt at combining them in Clay fails to illuminate the complexity of the problem, Ellis' attempt at problematizing the relationship between the two attitudes, whether successful or not, demonstrates the present quandary of American media critics. For as Christa Bürger notes, "even in cases where they find themselves in opposition to contemporary society and culture, they see this society and culture simultaneously as a history which they seek to appropriate as their own."[6] These critics attempt to combine the perspectives of the media "voyeur" and the the media "critic." The voyeur is fascinated by that which he sees and allows himself to be led along by the images and the action. The engendering of a voyeuristic attitude is the sign of all successful forms of mass culture: e.g., Hollywood movies, network broadcasting and bestseller novels. Their success lies in their ability to indeed tap real desires and needs and give them expression. At the same time their insidiousness lies in their channeling of the expression of these desires into forms which end up preventing their fulfillment. The critic on the other hand remains distant from the images and refuses to become caught up in the fascination. The critic seeks thereby to expose the subjugation which this fascination means for both viewer and viewed alike. But it is precisely the distance of the critic from the object of criticism which often makes the criticism, on the one hand, unfeeling, and, on the other hand, uninformed. Clay, as ruthless

5. *Ibid.*, p. 132.

6. Christa Bürger, "The Disappearance of Art: The Postmodernism Debate in the U.S." in *Telos* 68 (Summer 1986), p. 96.

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critic of mass media, is certainly guilty of the first charge, and, in spite of his complicity with the captive spectators, voices a critique which is extraordinarily oblivious of their situation. By depicting its characters as totally subsumed within their lifestyle and impossible to differentiate from each other, *Less Than Zero* confirms rather than resists the stereotyped images. But even a critique of mass media which begins as an informed analysis of the spectator often denies the voyeuristic impulse which threatens the analysis. For this analysis has as its basis the same frustrated desire to attain something real which compels the voyeur. The critic after all seeks the "realization" of that which he finds lacking in the object of criticism.

Which brings us back to the question "Is it real?" At first, this question which the boys in *Less Than Zero* pose about the snuff film does not seem to fit into the logic of voyeurism at all. A voyeur is supposed to be so fascinated by the images and the action that the constructedness and artificiality of what is being viewed remain unconsidered and, in the end, irrelevant. So long as the desired effect (emotional high, suspense, excitement, shock, sexual stimulation, thirst, hunger) is achieved in the receiver, the image has been successful, regardless of whether there is any "reality" to the image. This should apply as well to the snuff film as it does to a TV thriller, a Hollywood movie, a Coca-Cola commercial, or a network news broadcast. In all these examples the images are oriented toward drawing in their viewers and riveting their attention, thereby maintaining sales and improving ratings. The question of the reality behind the images is of secondary concern, often times even irrelevant.

For the critic as well, the question of an outside reality does not seem to always be an issue. In *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, Postman argues that the very logic of the video medium, independent of any other outside factors, threatens to destroy the possibility of rational debate and argumentation in practically every area of public society.[7] In Postman's eyes, the video medium dictates the characteristics of that which is shown through it. The emphasis on immediate images, the need to constantly change the images, and the compulsion to pull elements out of their contexts are unavoidable characteristics of television programming. These properties prevent sustained thought on the part of the viewer and even dissolve the fundamental concept of contradiction upon which all logical thinking is based. According to Postman, the inevitable consequence of the rise of the video media has been the deterioration of political debate in the US As evidence, Postman contrasts the televised debates between Reagan and Mondale in the 1984 presidential elections with the 1858 Lincoln-Douglas debates in Illinois. Whereas the Lincoln-Douglas debates were marked by complex argumentation and positions which could be critically studied and further discussed, the emphasis in the Reagan-Mondale debates was on appearances and on a rhetoric reminiscent of television advertising. Postman contends that the change in the character of political debate is a result of the

7. Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death* (New York: Viking Books, 1985)

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rise of the electronic media. As clear as the contrast is which Postman demonstrates, the conclusion which he draws fails to penetrate to the core of the problem. Because Postman ascribes such overwhelming power to the video medium and holds the medium itself principally responsible for the deterioration of American politics and education, he never discusses the relationship between the television image and an outside reality, a relationship which is crucial for the role of television images in our society. For as Noam Chomsky has pointed out, the spectators of televised sporting events, for example, are extremely well-informed, intellectually sophisticated, and not at all interested in appearances, but rather in concrete results. "I think this concentration on such topics as sports makes a certain degree of sense. The way the system is set up there is virtually nothing people can do anyway, without a degree of organization that's far beyond anything that exists now, to influence the real world. They might as well live in a fantasy world, and that's in fact what they do. I'm sure they're using their common sense and intellectual skills, but in an area which has no meaning and probably thrives because it has no meaning. . ."[8] The problem lies not with a medium which in itself leads to the imbecility of its users, but in the structuring of this medium in a way which excludes the populace from participation in debate about real social issues.

Television in the US demonstrates the absence of such active participation. Whatever the viewers might think or do, their thoughts and actions will have virtually no effect upon that which happens on the screen, in "TV land." However, this lack of participation is not caused by the medium itself, but by the current implementation of this medium within a context of decreasing public debate. The lack of active participation on the part of the typical television viewer in fact mirrors and reinforces the lack of active participation within which typical US "citizens" exist within their society. For the fascination of television viewers is predicated upon their boredom, a boredom which is a result of their exclusion from a participatory role, both in the action on the screen and in their society. The failure of society to provide its members with opportunities for active participation — the state and corporate bureaucratization of modern society — leads to a permanent state of boredom which drives a person to turn on the television set. Bureaucratization of society is the precondition for the development and expansion of the culture industry.[9]

But because the television does not offer anything essentially different than a passive relationship to uncontrollable events either, the boredom which turned on the television in the first place constantly threatens to overtake the viewer again while watching. Consequently, the first rule of American television programming is that the images must constantly entertain the viewer to the point where not only the boredom of the viewer's passive position in front

8. Interview with Noam Chomsky in *The Progressive*, Vol. 51, No. 7 (July, 1987), p. 24.
9. Cf. Russell Berman, "The Routinization of Charismatic Modernism and the Problem of Post-Modernity" in *Cultural Critique* 5 (Winter 1986-87), pp. 49-68.

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of the television is forgotten, but also the initial boredom in society which drove the viewer to buy the television and turn it on in the first place. This obligation to entertain is not inherent to the video medium itself, as Postman argues, but to the specific situation of American television programming, manifesting itself in its most successful forms as an ability to fascinate viewers, turning them into "voyeurs." For what separates a normal "viewer" from a true "voyeur" is this fascination which allows the voyeur to vicariously participate in the images and the action. This participation remains, however, on the level of voyeurism — the fascination functions, on the one hand, as a passive participation of the viewer with the viewed object which, on the other hand, is based upon the viewer's exclusion from a truly active participatory relationship to this same object. The inability of the typical citizen to influence decision-making in society is the prerequisite for the power the image attains by providing a replacement for such true participation. The citizen, frustrated in the attempt to achieve this goal, accepts the artificial media substitute which distracts the viewer from the original desire for participation to such an extent that it is displaced into a desire for spectacles and diversionary entertainment.

This voyeuristic attitude has become so far-reaching that it has overtaken not only the television viewer but also the television critic. Neil Postman directs his criticism against the medium and does not consider the programming at all. According to Postman, the programming itself cannot be successfully criticized because it has no other alternative but to create the fascination which is demanded by the logic of its medium. He compares the advent of television to the invention of the printing press. Both are technological advances which actually change the character of truth, according to Postman's invocation of Marshall McLuhan's slogan, "the medium is the message." In Postman's perspective, if the invention of a written language and the Gutenberg press necessarily made truth into something written, expository, and argumentative instead of oral, mnemonic, and aphoristic, the invention of television has made truth into something necessarily visual, spectacular, and entertaining. At this point, Postman's argument, in its attempt to be a strict analysis of the video medium, demonstrates its own participation in the same passive, voyeuristic attitude which it should be criticizing. Postman's description of the development of human technology from the alphabet to the television set, as well as his excusing of television programming because it is merely obeying the logic of its medium, recalls the same attitude which prevails over the television viewer. By viewing both the development of technology and of television programming as if they were occurring on a screen, totally beyond the control of the viewer, he fails to recognize possibilities for interaction with other aspects of society, possibilities which can radically alter the "logic" of television. He in effect affirms these developments by participating in them in the same passive, fascinated way that voyeurs "participate" vicariously in that which they are watching. In both cases the participation is an affirmation of the object which questions neither the relation of the viewer to the object — Postman

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himself never mentions the voyeuristic quality of this relationship — nor the extent to which the object both hides and betrays a reality more important than the object itself.

The failure of Postman and the television voyeur to perceive this reality leads in both cases to the assumption that this reality does not exist. With the television voyeur this assumption takes the form of a fascination with the image which considers the question of the reality of this image as either irrelevant or senseless. The level of fascination is the primary interest. With Postman this assumption expresses itself in the belief that truth itself changes according to the medium. "The medium is the message," and there is no reality behind the medium. Hence Postman cannot even conceive of the possibility that television's fascination might be grounded in a reality separate from it — the bureaucratization of modern society.

In spite of such denials, however, the question "Is it real?" continues to recur. For the television viewers, the question is an expression of the inadequacy of the pure image in satisfying their desires. For Postman, who implicitly asks a similar quesion by undertaking a critique of television at all, this question signals the sense of loss remaining after the disappearance of the message in the medium and the withering of public debate in society. If it were not for this sense of loss, Postman would have to embrace television as the bringer of a new age in truth, and all his humanist worries about a society without political debate would be obsolete concerns from out of the antiquated medium of written language. A critique of television would be senseless because the advent of the video medium would be inevitable and unstoppable, as open to criticism and human decision as the movement of the stars in the sky or, in Postman's perspective, the play of images on the screen.

That Postman senses such a loss in spite of his own argument is to be explained by the fact that the phenomenon he is describing is only a part of a larger process of bureaucratization in American society. But Postman's fascination with the logic of the video medium itself causes him to overlook the social prerequisites for television's exploitation of a passive voyeuristic attitude. It is also this oversight which explains his lame liberal solution to the problem which he sees as being confined to the effects of television. His solution is a change in educational policy which would teach children to be "critical viewers." Postman fails to demand changes in television programming and in the bureaucratic organization of both the television industry and American society in general. He thus demonstrates the same paralyzing despair in the face of the power of technological developments and the bureaucratization of society as the despair which draws the voyeur to the image.

An article in the *New York Times* describing a shootout in Miami between FBI agents and two suspected robbers reported that "A few cars traveling on the street merely slowed and steered around the stalled vehicles as the agents and the robbery suspects exchanged fire. Several witnesses later said they had believed at first they had come across the filming of a scene from the television

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show 'Miami Vice'."[10] Because the witnesses consider reality as if it were an image, the actual shootout is no longer a part of direct experience which has any consequences for those experiencing the event. The motorists could ignore the shooting and steer around just as if it were a television show to be switched off. The stance toward reality becomes a passive one. According to Susan Sontag, whereas "philosophers since Plato"[11] have insisted upon the distinction between image and reality, both a "primitive" sensibility and the "modern" one do without such a distinction. "But the true modern primitivism is not to regard the image as a real thing; photographic images are hardly that real. It is common now for people to insist about their experience of a violent event in which they were caught up — a plane crash, a shoot-out, a terrorist bombing — that 'it seemed like a movie'."[12] As the "Miami Vice" incident demonstrates, Sontag's observation about the transformation of reality into an image is certainly to be taken seriously. The actual development of the video media and the resultant change in the way reality is actually perceived implacably demonstrate that the relationship between image and reality has fundamentally changed since the advent of photographic images. But in her ardor to show that the "powers of photography have in effect de-Platonized our understanding of reality, making it less and less plausible to reflect upon our experience according to the distinction between images and things, between copies and originals,"[13] she neglects to develop the distinction between the "primitive" treatment of images as reality and the "modern" treatment of reality as image. For the "primitive," by elevating image to the level of reality, maintains an active relationship to both image and reality and is a participant in both, subject to their influence and able to influence them in turn. An image is not merely an imitation, but an emblem, a talisman, which embodies otherwise unseen powers and which is to be respected as such. The "modern primitive," however, by reducing both reality and image to the level of a TV image, maintains a passive relationship to both reality and image and is a helpless spectator of both. Not only is "Miami Vice" an imitation, but the actual shootout cannot be taken seriously either. Instead of being able to consider both images and thereby also the metaphysical as serious components of a heterogeneous reality, the "modern primitive" reduces everything to the level of impotent images, shorn of any real significance.

This repression of an active relationship to both image and reality eventually feeds into a latent aggression. The resulting violence comes to light in the fascination of the snuff film viewers in *Less Than Zero*. The passive fascination of these viewers at first fits in with the earlier model of alienation from real participation. The viewers embrace a passive voyeuristic stance which robs

10. *New York Times*, Apr. 12, 1986.
11. Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1977), p. 153.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 161.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 179.

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them of a direct participation in reality. The boy being castrated and the boy watching the castration do not stand in direct relation to each other. It is only the relationship of their roles which influences each of them. The first boy is not being castrated because one particular boy wanted to watch, but because of the general existence of such a desire. He does not ever see the real viewer, but only the camera, an abstraction of this viewer. The boy who watches is not fascinated by the castration of a particular boy, but by the thought of such a thing happening at all. The original castration was an act of violence performed for the benefit of the camera and, ultimately, of the viewers. Once the event is transferred to the screen, it becomes a spectacle and the questions of intervention, practical action, and morality become irrelevant. Instead, the effects of the images on the viewer become the primary concern.

The frightening aspect of this development is that, together with the stimulation which the snuff film viewers in *Less Than Zero* experience in watching the film is a nonchalance which carries over into their reactions to "real" events. The characters discover a dead body in an alley and carry out the gang rape of a 12-year-old girl with the same detached and yet rapt fascination with which they view a film. Not only that, but their actions actually mimic the actions which they originally see on film. Not only does pure stimulation become the primary concern in watching a film, stimulation, not participation, becomes the essential characteristic of all experience. This change in the character of experience leads in turn to a horrifying revision of the meaning of participation for the snuff film viewers. Whereas the television viewer's passive fascination provides a replacement for direct experience, and the underlying longing for a participatory situation is thus forgotten, the snuff film viewers have reached the point where participation has been redefined as subjugation. In this new sense, the snuff film viewers push for more participation. The thrill which accompanies the young boys' hope in *Less Than Zero* that the castration was "real" is the horrifying expression of a desire on the part of the voyeur to stop being a voyeur and become a participant. For if a young boy had truly been castrated in order to make the snuff film, then the voyeurs have the assurance that their collective gaze, by creating the demand for such a castration, actually did have a real effect on that which they see. The absolute boundary which the screen creates between viewer and viewed, preventing the development of any direct relationship between the two, would have been overcome. But in the case of our snuff film viewers, the breakdown of the absolute boundary between viewer and viewed, far from being the fulfillment of the dream of a participatory democracy, becomes the blueprint for the torture chamber.

The move from passive fascination to active aggression can be traced in the historical development of the forms of mass culture. Berman has provided a detailed analysis of this development. Without going into details, it will suffice to note that, in the 1980s, the passification which the image once enforced becomes coupled with a simultaneous unleashing of latent aggression. "The increasingly violent character of culture industrial manipulation is evident not

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only in the bloodlust of flims like *Friday the Thirteenth* and *Halloween*, but in the murderous sociability portrayed in daytime soap operas or prime time series (*Dallas, Dynasty*) in contrast with which the television figures of the 1950s and 1960s seem endearing in their naive accounts of humanistic values."[14] What differentiates the snuff film viewer from the previous description of the television viewer is that the television viewer's passive and "naive" identification derives from an empathy with the characters or the action. Such empathy, the most "endearing" aspect of the television viewer, is missing from the snuff film viewer, as it is from the sadist-torturer. *Leave It to Beaver*, *Friday the Thirteenth*, and the snuff film are stages in a development in which the viewer gains more and more distance from the action — at first totally empathizing with the characters, and by the end deriving only stimulation from the effects of the images. In this development there remains an essential tie between the voyeur who must settle for a vicarious fulfillment of desire and the snuff film viewer who, unsatisfied with vicarious fulfillment, begins to demand a direct participation which takes the form of a violent subjugation. The fulfillment of desire expresses itself as violent aggression. As Berman argues, "the attack on erotic restriction has turned into its opposite: the restriction of eros to universal competitiveness and a weakening of the structures with which eros held thanatos in check. The modernist promise of unlimited pleasure has been realized as a constantly increasing aggressive potential. . ."[15] While Berman here emphasizes the proximity of eros and thanatos — the voyeur and the snuff film viewer — he also relates how this aggressive potential feeds into bureaucratic structures which contain equally destructive impulses.

It turns out, however, that this aggressive potential is also an element of the critic. The element of empathy differentiating the naiveté of the television viewer from the violence of the snuff film viewer, a sign of compassion, was what also caused the television viewers to lose themselves in the television plot in the first place, thereby giving up on social action in reality. The empathy and identification with another's situation, a sign of compassion, leads in this case to both an alienation from one's own situation and a consequent inability to actively criticize this situation. It was precisely this problem against which modernists such as Benjamin and Brecht directed their aesthetics. Through the use of techniques such as montage, distraction, or interruption of dialogue, they sought to break down the identification of the viewer with the characters in order that the viewer might develop a critical stance.[16] But the elimination

14. Russell Berman, "Modern Art and Desublimation" in *Telos* 62 (Winter 1984-85), p. 51.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 52.
16. Benjamin writes: ". . . the film actor lacks the opportunity of the stage actor to adjust to the audience during his performance, since he does not present his performance to the audience in person. This permits the audience to take the position of the critic, without experiencing any personal contact with the actor." Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" in *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), p. 228.

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of identification in the fostering of a critical audience corresponds with the elimination of empathy in the genesis of the snuff film viewer.[17]

This unexpected congruence underlines the fact that the problem of the spectator is twofold and paradoxical. For in both the case of the voyeur and that of the critic, the result is "less than zero." On the one hand, when images become "larger than life," as they do for the voyeur, reality becomes less than the "zero" of the televised image. On the other hand, when the voyeur has no sympathy in the eyes of the critic, the critic's lack of feeling, his cold castration of the voyeur, is even less appealing than the "zero" of the voyeur's passive fascination. But this cold contempt which the critic too often directs against the voyeur, resulting in a cynical despair, is primarily a result of the critic's failure to identify with and encourage those aspects of the voyeur which are not determined by the video medium. Analyses of film and video which do not recognize the primary role of an outside reality for the development and logic of video must remain trapped within the strict dichotomy of spectator and critic. The successful merging of these two poles and the attainment of something more than that which is being presented on the screen can only come about when this basic question concerning video, "Is it real?" is answered with "Of course not. It's only Hollywood."

17. The proximity of Benjamin's conception of the critical audience to the snuff film viewers is made hauntingly clear by this passage in Benjamin's essay: "Here the question is: How does the cameraman compare with the painter? To answer this we take recourse to an analogy with a surgical operation. The surgeon represents the polar opposite of the magician. The magician heals a sick person by the laying on of hands; the surgeon cuts into the patient's body. The magician maintains the natural distance between the patient and himself; though he reduces it very slightly by the laying on of hands, he greatly increases it by virtue of his authority. The surgeon does exactly the reverse; he greatly diminishes the distance between himself and the patient by penetrating into the patient's body, and increases it but little by the caution with which his hand moves among the organs. In short, in contrast to the magician — who is still hidden in the medical practitioner — the surgeon at the decisive moment abstains from facing the patient man to man; rather, it is through the operation that he penetrates into him." *Ibid.*, p. 233. Benjamin's primary concern being the breakdown of the cult value of art (a cult value which maintained an authoritarian relationship between the work of art and the recipient), he failed to foresee the possibilities for subjugation which an accompanying breakdown of the boundary between art and reality opens up — the subjugation of reality to the cameraman and the corollary subjugation of the spectator to the distorted reality of the screen. Yet the violence implied by the cameraman's position comes through in Benjamin's analogy with the surgeon.

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Exclusion and Inclusion in Terms of Endearment

Mas'ud Zavarzadeh

The anxiety of loneliness that pervades American life and determines its emotional and social boundaries is ultimately the anxiety of exclusion: the uneasy feeling that one has become redundant in the group(s) to which one desires to belong. By representing social life as a mosaic of various competing groups rather than as a collectivity, the existing social order reproduces its dominant cultural values. A group's main cultural function is the validation of its members' identity; it is a congregation of separate sovereign individuals who have competed with others to get into the group and, once in the group, continue their rivalry with others in order to stay in it. As a group, they also vie with other groups to increase their desirability as a social organization. The value of a group is in fact directly determined by the amount of competition it takes to be accepted by it — the more exclusive a group is the more appealing it is to join. The worth of membership in a group then depends on its scarcity which is a mode of commodification of human relations.

What makes groups such an essential part of contemporary life is that they are based on two fundamental concepts: that people are independent moral agents, and the belief in competition as the only valid determining force in social life. This is partly the reason why prevailing American morality rejects the idea of collectivity (as opposed to groupings) since collectives are transindividual, thus negating restrictive selection and competition. Collectives are founded on the idea of constructing subjectivity through joint participation in the social reality. The dominant middle-class view of human relations considers a collectivity to be a state of entropic anonymity since it is not the outcome of individual competition. Thus collectives, unlike groups, are seen as the denial of individuality.

James L. Brooks' *Terms of Endearment* is a film about groups — groups composed of mother and daughter; husband and wife; mother, daughter and father; mother, sons, father and lovers. Each group attempts to encompass a few and banish all others. The members of each group, in order to keep their relations intact and free from alliances with others, manipulate each other and turn their groups into closed spaces. The film reproduces the logic of exclusion/inclusion in these interactions and represents it, with tremendous charm

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and humor, as the inevitable mode of relating to others. From the film's opening scene, in which the voice of Emma's father intervenes between mother and daughter in an attempt to reappropriate the mother back into the bounds of the husband-wife relation, thereby excluding the baby, to the final scene, in which Tommy, one of Emma's sons, and Garrett move toward Garrett's swimming pool, thus distancing themselves from the others at the reception and inaugurating a new restricted group, the film depicts community as a set of exclusive competing groups. In doing so it naturalizes the individuality and separateness of members of various groups and thus denies collectivity. Futhermore, it offers exclusion/inclusion as the universal underlying logic of all human relations.

Of the three major clusters of relations (evolving around Aurora, Emma and Flap), the most energetic centers on Aurora. Aurora's main concern in life is to prevent her own loneliness by keeping the exclusivity of her relationship with her daughter, Emma — she has to keep "their group" intact from the desires of Emma's father as in the opening scene in which she climbs into Emma's crib instead of returning to her husband; from Emma's closest friend, Patsy, and above all from Emma's husband, Flap. After Emma's father dies and thus leaves Aurora and Emma alone together, Aurora has to fight off Patsy's invasion of her emotional terrain. Emma and Patsy are close friends, so close in fact that their relationship sometimes borders on sexual infatuation. Emma kisses Patsy on the lips, for example, while her mother, who is furious over her decision to marry Flap, is standing in the hallway shouting and banging on her bedroom door. The kiss is, of course, a gesture to reassure Patsy that Emma's impending marriage to Flap will not interfere with their friendship. All the relations depicted in the film are more or less like the one between Emma and Patsy in the sense that they are anchored in the exclusivity of the group. If, for whatever reason, a new person has to be included, the group experiences a sense of crisis that will have to be managed by emotional pacification or blackmail. The model of relations that lies behind all these interactions, in other words, is the notion of connection as a closed space. In the closed space, the persons involved in the relationship feel safe from the competition of new people and celebrate the claustrophobic site of their connection as an instance of intimacy.

When Patsy grows up and moves into a new space, both geographically and emotionally, Aurora declares a truce with her since she is no longer a rival and in fact recruits her into a new exclusive group fighting Flap for Emma's closeness. The rivalry over Emma between Aurora and Flap dominates the film and overshadows all other struggles for inclusion shaping the pattern of relations in *Terms of Endearment*. Aurora naturalizes her jealousy of Flap in socially acceptable or at least familiar terms. He is, as far as she is concerned, an incompetent, unintelligent and very ordinary person who will not be able to take care of Emma. Her objections to Emma's marriage to Flap therefore have a rather traditional appeal; they are the expressions of a mother's concern for her daughter's future. In actual terms, however, Aurora is deeply resentful of the

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success with which Flap has been able to shatter the exclusive relationship that she has had with her daughter. No longer restricted, it has had to accept Flap and through Flap it will also expand to encompass others, the children, Tommy, Teddy and Melanie.

The ideology of the film naturalized the restrictiveness of relations and the notion of competition as the inevitable dynamics of all human connections and thus justifies Aurora's desire to monopolize Emma's affection. The film represents Aurora as a dedicated mother whose "jealousy" is culturally acceptable because her possessiveness is aimed at the welfare of Emma and her children. The scene in the hospital in which Aurora becomes hysterical over the nurse's delay in giving Emma her painkiller is a further explication of motherly love. In a raging temper, Aurora admonishes the nurses for neglecting her daughter. Her anger is naturalized as the fury of a loving mother over her daughter's suffering, while in actuality it is the outcome of her realization that she can no longer control or restrict her relations with her daughter now that nurses, doctors and other hospital staff have driven a wedge between them. The closed space of intimacy between herself and Emma has vanished forever.

The exclusivity Aurora requires from her affiliation with Emma is the same as that which she also demands from her relations with Garrett. At first she assures him that she does not mind his various affairs with other women, but after a while she discovers "relatively late in life" that sex is "fantastic" and grows increasingly monopolistic in her relations with him. The demand that he restrict his attentions to her shows up as early as their first date. In the restaurant where they are having lunch, Garrett, in his usual manner, ogles a young woman who is sitting at the next table only to be put on notice by Aurora who tells him that she thinks it is very rude to stare at another women when "you are with *me*."

It is characteristic of exclusive relations and their competitiveness that all who are involved in them are always uncertain of their duration and fearful of losing them. There is always the very real threat that the closed space of intimacy may be violated by the entry of new people and the individual may lose her privileged position in the relationship. Such a constant fear eventually develops into a feeling of mistrust for others since all people are seen as potential emotional rivals, and individuals with whom one has exclusive relations suddenly come to be regarded as betrayers. This view of one's intimates as potentially unfaithful and of others in general as emotional competitors leads the people involved in these noncollective relations to finally view themselves as the only reliable and trusted partner in affection. This form of exclusive relations with oneself is a mode of narcissism which, like other human emotions, is socially produced.

Garrett's mode of relating to others is a clear instance of this (defensive) narcissism. He, like Aurora, is seeking restricted relations, but his relationship does not have another person as its object of desire, only himself in his role as hero (astronaut). Intent on himself, he is unable to embrace others and thus ends up with passing affairs with a variety of women including Aurora. In the scene in Aurora's summer house when he sees her for the last time as her lover, he tells

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her that he must break off their relationship because he is beginning to feel an "obligation" to Aurora and he is not prepared to make a commitment. Garrett's closest companion is the water in which he continually swims, and its liquidity embraces him without any resistance. It is significant that when Aurora criticizes him for decorating his room with memorabilia of his days as an astronaut and tells him that such use of his profession to impress and seduce women is a trivialization of the most cherished part of his life, Garrett responds by saying, "You have to use all that you have." All that he has are "images" of himself as an astronaut which he worships and relies on for emotional self-sustenance.

Although Garrett is represented as a self-indulgent and free-floating individual who is extremely un-self-conscious, his emotional contact with the world is not all that different from the other characters in the film. Almost all of them are, in one form or another and in varying degrees, as narcissistic as Garrett. Narcissism is inscribed in any exclusivist relation, since one seeks this primarily for one's own emotional security. All the characters, like Garrett, make some gesture towards reaching out and showing love and involvement in the lives of others, but at the roots of these gestures are self-protection and self-intimacy. Garrett, for instance, in the airport in Lincoln, tells Aurora that he loves her and attempts to show affection to Emma's children in the reception after her death. In another case, although Aurora's possessiveness for Emma is naturalized in the film as a "mother's love," it is clear that beneath the "mother's love" is in fact Aurora's deep narcissism. When Emma marries Flap, Aurora feels so displaced that she is not capable, as a sign of her "love" for Emma, of attending her wedding. She is so self-occupied that even making an appearance at the simple ceremony, thereby recognizing the primacy of Emma's connection to Flap, would dislodge her privileging of herself and disrupt her emotional life. This is the same emotional disorientation that Garrett has felt since his glorious days as an astronaut came to an end — he does not know how to live in a world in which he is not the sole focus of attention. Like Aurora, he lives in emotional blankness. He fills this blank space by changing women, by getting drunk and by such antics as steering his Corvette with his feet while Aurora presses the gas pedal. For Aurora the blank space is filled mostly with her emotional exploitation, blackmail and bribery of Emma and by her intimidation of Flap.

Emma's relations with Flap are an escape from Aurora's emotional exploitation, but Emma herself is as exclusive in her relations, as is Aurora. In the scene where Emma presents Flap with a tie, the symbolic resonance of this gift in the Emma-Flap group is especially telling. Flap is surprised and then mildly upset because he sees in the gift more of Aurora's presence than Emma's love (her assurance of exclusivity) for *himself*. He thinks Emma is giving him the tie because she is embarrassed by the way he might appear, without a tie, in Aurora's house. Emma, however, objects to this interpretation declaring that she bought the tie because the act of buying it made her "happy." She then accuses Flap of being insensitive to her happiness and unaware of the

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desires and needs of any person other than himself. This is a paradigmatic scene in the sense that husband and wife are each interrogating the motives of the other and pointing out the narcissistic relations each is seeking by excluding the other. In other words, Emma's final point is that Flap is so restrictive in his love of himself that there is no room for her: he cannot but spoil all her moments of happiness because for him to become aware of her happiness means to be distracted from himself. Flap, on the other hand, makes it clear to Emma that everything she does is in fact aimed at making herself the sole object of uncontested desire: she intends her feelings of happiness to be the focus of attention.

Flap's self-interested pursuit of his own pleasure, particularly his affair with Janice, completely breaks up his connection with Emma. As Flap's colleague and mistress, Janice not only intrudes into Emma's special group but also represents that side of Flap's life which is most alien and removed from Emma's control. Flap is a college teacher and, in a sense, he uses his profession to disrupt those groups preventing him from forming even more exclusive associations for himself. First in order to separate Emma from Aurora, he moves to Iowa to teach, taking Emma with him and thus literally placing a huge distance between her and Aurora; then, in order to establish an entirely exclusive relation of his own with Janice, he moves his family even further to Nebraska where Janice has a new teaching position. On discovering the affair and the reason for the dislocating move, Emma confronts Janice who responds by saying that she can "validate" Emma's emotions. The term "validate," which Emma angrily repeats over and over again to Flap, does not conform to the commonsense language of emotions used in her relations, rather, it marked the "professional" code in which Janice and Flap participate and signals Emma's exclusion from this professional/lover group. Emma reacts to this violation of her special relation to Flap by later preventing him from having custody of the children when she dies. Not only does she reject Flap and bar him from any exclusive connection to his children, but she also insures that Janice will never be able to establish any relation to her children after her death. By dictating that the children are to be raised by her mother, Emma perpetuates her control over a newly exclusive relationship — this time with her children and mother — even after her death.

When Emma dies and thus excludes Aurora from their relations forever, Aurora takes the three children as a substitute for Emma. Now the group which, in its originary form, consisted of Emma-Aurora-Emma's father and was then reduced to Emma-Aurora is now expanded to include the three children and Aurora. But all indications are that soon this group will again be reduced to Aurora and Emma's daughter, Melanie — but only after Aurora successfully fights off Patsy for her. Melanie is a substitute for Emma and the person through whom Aurora's desire for emotional exclusivity will be perpetuated.

Aurora's relentless attempts to form exclusive groups in which she can feel secure and accommodated are attempts to forestall what she regards to be her inevitable loneliness. By representing her efforts in the name of a mother's love (as far as Emma is concerned) or a lover's desire (in respect to Garrett),

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the film normalizes her refusal to cooperate with others, to form collective, sharing relations capable of embracing others. Of course, part of this same ideology justifying her actions implies that even if she wanted a cooperative, inclusive group she could not attain it because "it is the nature of things" that everyone else is seeking the same degree of exclusivity with others as is Aurora. Garrett, Emma, Flap and all the other characters in the film, like Aurora, are each attempting to escape/prevent loneliness by forming exclusive groups that they hope will provide them with the warmth of connection.

The world of *Terms of Endearment* is, beneath its surface of easy charm and humor, a dark and frightening one in which lurks the fear of loneliness and exclusion from the community of others. In the film, humor is used to conceal this darkness. Despite itself, the film depicts the networks of (non)relations constituting contemporary bourgeois society: relations in which atomistic individualism — in the name of personal freedom — prevents any sustaining collectivity and the institutionalization of competitive groups engenders a deep bleakness. The film, however, naturalized this bleakness, presenting it as an amusing series of quarrels between various characters, and thus not only masking the deep isolation of people in such a society but, in fact, putting forth competition as the inevitable, inherent logic of all modes of relating to others. In presenting competition as the basis of human connection, the film makes competition, as such, the sole arbiter or social life and thus offers the logic of capitalism as the universal logic of human societies.

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Reviews:

Remaking Love: Undoing Women?

Barbara Ehrenreich, Elizabeth Hess and Gloria Jacobs, *Remaking Love: The Feminization of Sex* (Garden City: Anchor Press, 1986).

Sylvia Hewlett, *A Lesser Life: The Myth of Women's Liberation* (New York: Warner Books, 1986).

Cautiously launched by Betty Friedan in 1963 with the publication of *The Feminine Mystique*, American feminism exploded in the 1960s with a revived determination to equalize the right of women to participate with men in the pursuit of the American dream. Friedan was addressing the problems of an idealized post-war version of marriage and motherhood during a time when the American consumer economy was booming. Suffering the malaise that inevitably follows the purchase of commercially packaged realizations of the "good life," many of Friedan's generation were beginning to question the adequacy of the post-war culture of femininity that, in the forms of domestic technologies, joys of motherhood and visions of conjugal bliss, turned out to deliver neither the meaning, the adventure nor the romance that its TV and Hollywood counterparts seemed to promise.

With the real significance of the family shrinking to a nuclear shell, the domestic functions of women beyond child-bearing were becoming redefined as maintaining an odorless and spotless showcase for the consumer economy and managing what was fast becoming an extended sleep-away camp for commercially colonized children. As the commodity form gained precedence over all other relations, the socialization of the young was increasingly occurring outside the home. Consequently, the much vaunted world of marriage, home and children came to ring ever more hollow. Between the more traditional extremes of poverty and plenty, life and death, there now existed a rapidly expanding ideological realm of meaning and meaninglessness. Shy of a more in-depth criticism of advanced industrial society as a whole, from the vantage point of the household, the work world of men — at least middle class professional men — looked a sight better than the largely symbolic and somewhat parasitic realm of the women's estate.

The assault on the feminine mystique, the post-war and largely consumerized construction of American Womanhood, and the search for access to a

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greater share in the work and play of American men was at first relatively tame. The call for the removal of legal barriers that made it difficult to leave the home and to gain a foothold in education, industry and the professions, nevertheless (given the post-war hype on womanhood and motherhood), required a cultural critique that, by the beginning of the 1970s, had reached excessive proportions. Radical feminism, arising on the heels of the Student Movement and the general emergency of the New Left, was not content to challenge the postwar culture of femininity with its banalization of woman and its glorification of consumer domesticity. Nor was it willing to settle for those legal reforms advocated by the moderates who made up the ranks of NOW.[1] Rather, they sought to root out all traces of any culture that articulated gender differences, and in those cases in which there seemed to be intractible biological factors reproducing a culture of gender difference, they sought to circumvent, outwit or undo them. Marriage was tainted, children were stultifying, wombs were prisons, and sexual organs themselves were suspect and in need of careful political analysis and demystification. The phallus was thought to be an instrument of domination and the vagina a passionless and inert gateway that men, through the long dark night of patriarchal, phallo-historical duration, penetrated women's sacred and enviolable temple in order to satiate their lusts, steal women's pleasures and indoctrinate their minds with male domination.[2] Love was a myth invented for purposes of male control.[3] Every wink of an eye, tipping of a hat, every bouquet of flowers became suspect. Grammatical constructions were carefully monitored for evidence of overt or covert chauvinistic biases.

But these are examples of the proverbial sins of youth that wisdom has always seen fit to forgive, given the lack of the tempering power of experience. What is less forgivable, however, is when the youthful flight of ideas becomes hardened into idols of the mind and the marketplace, leading to self-imposed blindness to the subtleties and complexities of existence, including those seemingly incorrigible tendencies toward concealing self-service under the cloak of objectivity. While no person nor group has a corner on such tendencies, it has become a particular problem today in academic and intellectual endeavors. Today any particular group, regardless of the legitimacy or illegitimacy of its grievances, is fertile ground for the cultivation of one's own fame and fortune in an economic and cultural framework that thrives on the pretenses of expertise and reaps a rich harvest on marketing images that foster controversy and flatter any and all manageable contentions.

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1. For a discussion of the paradoxical interplay between feminist particularism and the demands for formal equality by the women's movement, see Paul Piccone, "The Future of Feminism or A World Without Feminists," *New Political Science*, Vol. 3, No. 2/3 (Summer/Fall 1982).

2. For a discussion of the repressive implications of the ideology of clitoral exclusivity, see Renate Schlesier, "The Demise of Vaginal Sexuality," *Telos* 59 (Spring 1984).

3. See Benjamin R. Barber, *Liberating Feminism* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1975), for a discussion of reductionism in the theories of radical feminists.

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And this brings us to *Remaking Love*, by Ehrenreich, Hess and Jacobs. This book is triumphantly, and in a profound sense unjustifiably, subtitled "the Feminization of Sex."

The expressed purpose of this book is to stake out a claim to a feminist cultural victory that, for reasons the authors never attempt to explain, has either been overlooked or disowned by most women. In fact, in the very teeth of growing evidence of serious second thoughts about the value of the sexual version of an extended cultural "gate night," due at least in part to the economic, medical and emotional fallout it has brought about, the authors claim that women should consciously appropriate the feminist version of the "sexual revolution" while at the same time recognizing that, for men, there has been no serious change in their behavior and attitudes over the last several decades. This arbitrary surgical separation of the male and female variants of the "sexual revolution" sets the tone for the kind of strained, ideological self-service that runs throughout the book. For all practical purposes, failing to seriously address the growing reservations[4] and negative clinical documentation,[5] not to mention extensive popular reaction, regarding the sexual revolution and its service to the further weakening of protective social ties, impoverishment of the emotional lives of men, women and children, the threats of a still not fully comprehended medical catastrophe and the record increase in the numbers of women and children in poverty, the authors, employing an updated version of Newspeak, engage here in a kind of advertising campaign designed to rescue feminism from a faltering public image. This campaign strategy consists mostly in carefully isolating select cultural elements and consumer products from a wider and more problematic context, and then seeing within these products the fulfillment of some variant of a post-60s, feminist shibboleth. This is said despite the fact that, throughout the text there are acknowledgements of the problematic nature of much that they survey. The failure to give serious attention to these problems serves precisely to dismiss their significance.

When did the "feminization of sex" begin? With Beatlemania! The extent and the intensity of the hysterical abandon of adolescent and pre-adolescent girls, while having precursors, has no parallel. While noting in passing the growing tendency to treat teenagers and pre-teens as a lucrative consumer group, the authors turn away from this fruitful area of social analysis and concentrate on the supposed "androgenous appearance" of the Beatles as turning these children of the feminine mystique into pre-pubescent forebearers of the clitorally-conscious, libidinally-unfettered women of the coming decade.

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4. Christopher Lasch, *Haven in a Heartless World: The Family Besieged* (New York: Basic Books, 1977). On the problematic character of contemporary culture, see Christopher Lasch, *The Minimal Self: Psychic Survival in a Troubled World* (New York: Norton, 1984). See also "Symposium on Narcissism" *Telos* 44 (Summer 1980) for a discussion of the problem of narcissism, and its relation to sexual practices and the family.

5. See Herbert Headin, *The Age of Sensation: A Psychoanalytic Exploration of Youth in the 1970s* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1975).

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In effect, it was the socially unthreatening androgeny of the Beatles that served as a kind of releaser mechanism for historically repressed girls to begin to explore homegrown versions of sexual passion free from the social constructions of aggressive male dominance, motherhood, monogamy and the performance principle. While this thesis holds some interest, it is meant to carry too much ideological baggage and overlooks the larger significance of the appearance of the Beatles on the cultural horizon — a significance more adequately recognized by the "adult" commentators the authors dismiss.

The Beatles did speed up the sexual revolution that, however, had begun much earlier. The significance of the Beatles was the introduction of an unthreatening but definite commercialized sexuality into childhood. Beatlemania, as noted by the authors, was a carefully orchestrated, large scale commercial undertaking, that in addition to doing wonders for the reduction of the British war debt and offering some compensation for the loss of the empire, marks the successful establishment of the cultural colonization of the young and the triumph of media spectacles. Aside from failing to consider this aspect of Beatlemania, the authors, while commending the playful images of androgenous sexuality, make no attempt to account for the less than playful or benign history of sexual imagery and gesture that has subsequently developed in rock culture. The *Yellow Submarine* has increasingly turned bloody red, and the long hair of the androgenous Beatles has been followed by a string of progressively more grotesque displays of aggressive sexuality and brutality.

In the following chapters this monocular vision of feminist achievement is cast upon a successive number of social and cultural domains ranging from the transformation of public sexual "discourse" away from Freudianized medical expertise, to the mass market for gourmet guides to sexual adventure, all the way to the invasion of fundamentalist citadels of repression by feminist Rahabs such as Marabel Morgan.

The dominant theme, however, seems to be that, relative to the constraints of the medically reinforced feminine mystique of the 1950s with its myth of feminine passivity and its sanction of vaginal orgasm, the 60s and 70s witness the progressive liberation of women from this phallo-cratic tyranny. Beginning with Kinsey and later with Masters and Johnson, the nature of women's sexual experience and possibilities became progressively demystified. Kinsey's commitment to the advance of a scientific sexology led him to regard orgasms as the irreducible touchstone of all sexual activity. These were physiological events that could be recorded, counted and measured much like heartbeats, blood pressure and the movement of tectonic plates. The resolution of sexual activity on orgasm served to construct the true measures by which just exchange in sexual commerce could be determined. It would no longer suffice to trade off candy, roses or dinner for two — and for the more slick negotiators, a new dishwasher or dryer — in exchange for a man's direct carnal pleasures between the sheets.

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Following on the Kinsey's heels, Masters and Johnson delivered a death blow to the debilitating "myth" of the vaginal orgasm and paved the way for the resurrection of the despised clitoris, the true cornerstone of liberated feminine sexuality. Like the storming of the Bastille, the scientific declaration of the primacy of the clitoris marked the end of the old phallocentric ancient regime and put the power of sexual satisfaction directly — and in a sense literally — in the hands of women. The political significance of the ascent of clitoral primacy lay in the fact that while traditional, male dominated constructions of heterosexual practice tied women's sexual pleasure directly, passively and often hopelessly to male preference and performance, clitoral primacy opened up a range of sexual possibilities making the presence of the male, or at least the male phallus, at best, optional. Worse yet, in many ways it was no longer most preferable given that, according to Masters and Johnson, the women studied in their research appeared to achieve the most intense orgasm while masturbating. Not only were the fingers, tongues and toes of either sex sufficient for the attainment of clitoral ecstasy, but dildos and a host of electrically vibrating devices purchased by mail or in the local drug store could provide women with sexual gratification at a far cheaper price than the traditional path of life-long enslavement to marriage and a man. Much like the ancient Israelites fleeing the Pharoah across the Red Sea, liberated women could now begin an exodus through the great vaginal divide that would permanently separate them from those hated male heterosexuals who had traditionally used this passage again and again to erect the tombs of feminine passion.

The authors note, but do not critically reflect on, the impact of the market on the promotion of women's sexual liberation. By and large, the market is viewed favorably in its ability to offer variety, impersonality and free self-exploration. But, again with the same historical myopia and arbitrary selection, they at once fail to assess the role of the market in the genesis of sexual constructions that preceded the "remaking of love," nor give due weight to the role of the same market in helping to generate the "reaction" from which they seek to rescue the feminized version of the sexual revolution. While this makes for good propaganda, it will not do as social history. The methodology is much akin to the use of the "search and find" command on a computer. A complex social-cultural text is scanned for the use of a few select concepts and shibboleths and the isolated elements are then read out of that text and represented, context-free, as demonstrations of a theory. Thus, expressions of what could be called clitorally-centered pornography are discovered on the market and marked for their confirmation of feminized sex, while traditional and not-so-traditional forms of pornography are simply cast aside with a remark about "male fantasies." This is theory that perfectly mirrors the market-place and expresses a rather shameful variant on the fetishism of commodities.

There is an amusing development in the history of the interplay between scientific research, popular publications and the discourse on clitoral politics. Radical feminists had looked to the liberating implications of clitoral sexuality

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because it made men optional instruments in women's sexual pleasure. However, the belated unearthing of a dubious "G-Spot" located in the recesses of the recently, erotically exorcised vagina, threatened to drive a dangerous wedge between the politics of sexual liberation and the potentially irreducible biological conditions for the experience of maximum sexual gratification. Not only did the existence of a G-Spot threaten to sunder the perhaps prematurely celebrated coincidence of pleasure and independence and threaten the restoration of the phallo-dependent vaginal orgasm, but, given the internal geography of the vagina, this newly reclaimed royal estate seemed to be most effectively stimulated by the male organ delivered from behind. Thus, the recently consolidated feminist front was faced with the possibility of being outflanked, assaulted from the rear, and driven, screaming with delight, back into the stone age. The authors are not insensitive to the humor in this episode and had they been less taken up with their political agenda, might have, in the spirit of the age initiated by that great English Queen, thought to retitle their book, *The Comedy of Errors*, or perhaps more daringly, *Much Ado About Nothing*.

But, instead, we are invited to purvey the extension of the revolution into the increasingly chartered territory of sado-masochism. The proliferation of images and instruments associated with this sexual practice, this convergence of sex and power, pleasure and pain, and desire and death does not seem to ruffle the consciousness of our tour guides as they note the value of acting out — with mutual consent and, of course, role exchange — the themes of real dominance and subordination that has characterized traditional sexual arrangements. Once again the authors spare the readers the opportunity to consider the problematic nature of these developments and ignore the very existence of serious feminist concerns about the implications they have for women — concerns extensively articulated in recent, more serious, feminist literature.[6] This pathetic sanctification of sexual play involving equity in the utilizations of torture culminates with some musings about future frontiers of sexual exploration. Again, the convergence of advertising language and social theory mark the nadir of feminist theory. Apparently, this book was written too early to discover the possibility of sexual play in the form of mutual strangulation and the frontiers of "rough sex." Here Marx's comment about the relations of the sexes expressing our more generalized relations to nature seem appropriate.

The authors give passing consideration to the problem of sexually transmitted diseases and note that, while the threat of AIDS spreading beyond high risk groups has led to caution and greater value placed on monogamy, women have not been willing to altogether give up sex. This is passed on as a contemporary achievement. There is little that recommends this book other than

6. See Robin Ruth Linden ed., *Against Sado-Masochism. A Radical Feminist Analysis* (East Palo Alto: Frog in the Well, 1982); and Jeffrey Weeks, *Sexuality and its Discontents: Meaning, Myths and Modern Sexuality* (London, Boston, and Henley: Rutledge & Kegan Paul, 1985).

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the need to assess the sexual revolution. The present authors, however, do not seem too qualified to do it. It is becoming increasingly essential to understand the role that feminism has played in the overall development of American institution and culture in the last few decades. What is particularly needed is an analysis of the way in which the sexual revolution has had an impact on the economic status of women and contributed to the marginalization of many of them. What is also needed is an analysis of the way in which radical feminism, with its emphasis on the remaking of culture, has unwittingly contributed to the strengthening of narcissism and conformity within the system. The former has been done by Hewlett in her *Lesser Life*. The latter remains to be undertaken. If there is anything to be gleaned from the advent of increasing sexual freedom it must turn out to be something other than the congratulations accorded "casual sex," multiplication of "positions" or "variations," and the sanctification of infidelity. *Remaking Love* turns out to be neither about love in anything but the most reductionistic sense, nor about the "feminization of sex" — if feminization means anything more than women participating more directly in the minimalist culture of sensation.

According to Hewlett's extensive study of women's economic conditions in light of the 1960s feminist revival, except for the achievements of a minority (about 10%), American women have not only not made any significant economic gain but, overall, their lives are more difficult, pressured and economically insecure now than they were 20 years ago. This instability cannot be simply attributed to the economy as a whole, something she does not explore, but to the failure of the public and private sectors to develop support systems for the ever increasing numbers of working mothers.

The strain has been particularly great for single and divorced women with children. They are not only forced to support their families on a single income but, due to the logistics and financial burden of providing child care during working hours, often find whatever income they make insufficient to keep them from progressively slipping below the poverty line. As for those women who have either maintained a stable marriage or, in rarer cases, remarried after a divorce, the minimum conditions of care between mother and a newborn child, in the absence of maternity leaves and a variety of work-time options, has also made it difficult for women to achieve a degree of steady career advancement that would close the wage gap between men and women. That there be no premature accusations that the wage gap is due to legalized sexism and discrimination, Hewlett points out that single women without children generally achieve equality with men in terms of salaries and advancement. According to the author, the problems of modern American women do not lie in subjective or personal factors of male chauvinism and discrimination. The problems are paradoxically connected to one-sided views of equality that overlooks the particularity of women's double role as mothers and workers. These two roles place women in a condition requiring structural supports unneccesary to men and serve to make the struggle for legal-formal

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equality inimical to a woman's well being. The call for formal equality and the cultural assault on those conditions that were seen as barriers to it has produced, in general, "a lesser life" for women. In other words, abstract equality leads to substantive inequity.

The American women's movement comes in for serious criticism in this well researched study by a European-born, former Barnard economist. The two pronged feminist strategy — legal equality and the reconstruction of American culture, i.e. the sexual revolution — led to the present predicament. Rather than following the more successful approach of European "social feminists" of making alliances with various labor unions and political parties to bring about benefits such as maternity leaves, flex-time and day care, American feminists chose instead to attack the family, thus weakening traditional protections for mothers and providing no new ones to take their place. Hewlett is particularly strong in her indictment of the feminist denigration of motherhood — a role the vast majority of women assume and will continue to assume. She argues that the feminist bias against motherhood is, to a great extent, responsible for the defeat of the Equal Rights Amendement.

Hewlett also points to the negative impact of feminist support for no-fault divorce and property division. By weakening traditional protective barriers against abandonment and child neglect, divorced women now find themselves, often after years of marriage and work at home, thrust on the job market for which they are unprepared and unqualified.

While the author criticizes the direction of American feminism, her primary aim is to pinpoint the structural conditions that prevent women from closing the wage gap with men and to propose policies to improve their economic status, their lives, and strengthen families. Women continue to earn a little more than 60% of men's average income. Yet, they are nearly half of the work force. There are several interwoven factors contributing to this situation — but all stemming from the dual role and subsequent dual burdens thrust upon women. One factor effecting the wage gap is the tendency of women to take on part time work due to domestic responsibilities. Another, and a more serious one for those who must work full time, is the tendency of women, in the absence of structural supports, to take on jobs that may pay less or offer less opportunities for advancement because they are the only jobs that fit well with domestic obligations. Arranging for sitters, juggling work and school schedules, etc., makes commuting and overtime generally prohibitive. The need to mesh work and family schedules makes it difficult for women to take the best paying as well as the most rewarding jobs. Hewlett's point is that working mothers (who make up the majority of working women) have a difficult time performing well in their work and, when they do, they have an equally difficult time remaining in their jobs. In the absence of maternity leaves and other arrangements, even the most secure positions can be seriously set back if not completely lost due to a pregnancy. For those women who

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remain within the professional track and do well, such achievement is often purchased at the expense of family and children. Hewlett also points out that, as a consequence, for married women with children this is enough to insure that the income of the husband will exceed that of the wife and result in the reinforcement of traditional gender roles in the household.

As a solution, Hewlett proposes the adoption of programs akin to those developed by European feminists. This involves de-emphasizing formal equality and the sexual revolution, and stressing the unique social position of women as mothers and workers in the larger economy. It also involves the formulation of programs designed to ease the stress of joining these two roles and reduce the present tendency to consign married mothers to lower earning levels and thus to a lesser life. Her practical proposals consist of the institution of paid maternity leaves, extension of flex-time and job sharing, the development of quality day care by both the public and the private sectors, the extension of the school day and the pursuit of the policy of comparable worth. While each of these proposals seem to alleviate the burdens and inquities she discusses, they are not without difficulties. Thus, for example, their institutionalization would, among other things, simply strengthen the iron cage of homogenization and bureaucratic administration of daily life.

Similarly, the institution of comparable worth could only be carried out on a selective and arbitrary basis. Government jobs could probably be restructured with the least difficulty, but carrying such a program into the private sector would require the reconstitution of the economy. This is not going to happen as a result of a women's lobby, nor even by any other of the political proposals suggested by the author. In other words, the institutionalization of comparable worth would either be incidental to the deeper problems they are meant to correct, or require that the proposal be formulated much more broadly. As for the extension of the schoolday — despite Albert Shanker's approval — given the educational system's recent track record for grinding out functional illiterates and its ever increasing inefficiency, this would also end up extending state controls over people's lives. When all is said and done, despite Hewlett's criticism of formal equality, her own project remains hopelessly entangled in the same general feminist logic requiring the cancellation of what might be simply our natural condition, i.e., that there are limits to what we can socially engineer away when it comes to differences determined by gender and the social roles they entail.

Alex Delfini

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Facing up to the Underclass

William Julius Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, The Underclass and Public Policy* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1987).

Ten years ago Wilson published what is by most reckonings the most influential work on American race relations to appear during the 1970s, *The Declining Significance of Race*. In many ways, his new book, *The Truly Disadvantaged*, is a further development and elaboration of one of the key themes of that earlier work. Yet, while the two books are inextricably connected, the first was generally well received on the Right (much to its author's dismay) and savagely attacked in some circles of the Left. The reception of *The Truly Disadvantaged* has been much the reverse.

In *The Declining Significance* Wilson argued that, while for most of US history race had been the primary determinant of the life chances of black Americans, by the late 1970s this was no longer true. In the face of a combination of structural economic changes and the partial victories of the civil rights movement, race had declined in significance relative to class. This had led to a growing bifurcation within black America. The black middle class was expanding, and despite continuing discrimination in many arenas, was increasingly successful. At the same time a predominantly (but not entirely) black underclass found itself ever more isolated socially and economically from the American mainstream. While the legacy of hundreds of years of American racism was certainly responsible for the disproportionately black composition of this underclass, Wilson insisted that its currently deteriorating condition could not be blamed primarily on contemporary discrimination.

At first glance, this may seem a particularly harmless bit of Weberian sociology: an essentially academic debate over the interplay of class and status group characteristics not unlike those heard in graduate seminars. Indeed, despite its provocative title, Wilson's slim volume was calmly argued and modest in tone. Yet *The Declining Significance of Race* cut to the very core of American racial politics. First, it challenged what had become a fundamental ideological tenet of the American Left — that racism is an immutable and unchanging fact of American culture and provides the explanation for virtually all negative aspects of the black American experience. Secondly, the argument challenged the efficacy of *both* the individually-oriented civil rights approaches of the 1960s and the group-based, racially-specific affirmative action policies of the 1970s as ways of addressing the problems of black poverty. Finally, it

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implicitly challenged the position of the black middle class leadership — from the moderates of the NAACP to militant radical intellectuals — as spokesmen for the black poor.

Predictably, Wilson's notion of black middle class success was attacked by some as premature and politically dangerous,[1] and by others as simply untrue.[2] At least one critic went so far as to argue that integration had actually increased the importance of race in the lives of middle class blacks, as it had brought them into closer contact with whites, and therefore with racism.[3] On the other hand, the black socialist professor suddenly found himself defended by neo-conservatives, who saw in his work a justification for attacks on affirmative action (interestingly, when the *New York Times Magazine* ran a cover story on the debate, they pinch hit for Wilson with a more unambiguously neo-conservative spokesman for the "class" position[4]). Wilson himself continued to point out what he saw as the more significant aspect of his analysis, the growing poverty and isolation of the underclass — yet his arguments about the role of racism in the lives of the black middle class took center stage.

Given the bitterness of this debate, a lesser thinker might have made a life's work out of defending his position. Wilson, to his credit, avoided this. After devoting some years to the declining significance thesis (as time went by it was increasingly obvious that he and his critics were talking past each other), he turned to the problem of increasingly intractable poverty among the underclass.

The result is *The Truly Disadvantaged*, a book that will certainly end the misperception of Wilson as a conservative. Nor will conservatives be the only ones unhappy with the work. Wilson's social-democratic policy proposals manage to be both too radical for the "neo-liberals" in the Democratic party, and too "mainstream" for most of the academic Left. Yet despite these reservations, conservatives, radicals and particularly liberals and neo-liberals are reading and talking about Wilson's book, and with good reason. In almost singlehandedly making the concept of an "underclass" intellectually respectable, Wilson has set the terms for the next debate on poverty within the Democratic party and beyond. In describing the underclass, in explaining how it came about, and in pointing us at least in the direction of a solution to its (and our) problem, Wilson has written what will probably be the most important book on poverty to appear in the 1980s.

Part of the power of *The Truly Disadvantaged* is that it arrives at a moment when almost everyone, including those who disagree with Wilson's policy proposals, seems to have suddenly come to the realization that the underclass is too important to ignore. Since Wilson first raised the alarm 10 years ago, the rate

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1. Kenneth Clark, "The Role of Race" *The New York Times Magazine* (October 5, 1980).
2. Alphonso Pinkney, *The Myth of Black Progress* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984).
3. Charles V. Willie, "The Inclining Significance of Race," *Society* 15 (July/August) No. 10.
4. Carl Gershman, "A Matter of Class" *The New York Times Magazine* (Oct. 5, 1980).

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of labor force participation by young black males has continued to decline and the proportion of black children being raised by young single mothers has increased. As Wilson documents, the very poor have become more geographically concentrated in the inner city; far from job opportunities, far from the middle class, and far from institutions that might ameliorate the effects of poverty.

Perhaps the only positive side effect of this continuing deterioration has been to restore a degree of pragmatism to liberal and radical discussions of poverty. Ten years ago many liberals denied there was such a thing as an "underclass." Those further to the Left often continue to express uneasiness with the term, and with some reason. Historically the word "underclass" has often been used as a vernacular substitute for Marx's *Lumpenproletariat* (an association reinforced by its phonetic proximity to "underworld"). The term is still often used with criminal implications.[5] This can indeed lead to the association of economic isolation with moral degeneracy and end up as a rehash of the old division between the "deserving and undeserving poor."

Moreover, a major part of what makes a group of people an "underclass" (as opposed to simply poor) is that their *behavior* is markedly different than that of the rest of society. This introduction of behavioral issues into the discussion of poverty has long been rejected by liberals and radicals (not completely without reason) as "blaming the victim" and a short step from racism. Thus, for somewhat different reasons, both radicals and liberals have preferred either to speak about oppressed racial and ethnic groups, ignoring issues of class, or to ignore cultural issues in purely economic discussions of the "lower class" or the "lower working class." The latter term is particularly misleading. "Working" is precisely what a growing segment of the poor in many industrial societies are not doing.

Today it is increasingly clear that such approaches obscure the issue. To talk about the lower class or the lower working class is, according to Wilson, "to fail to address one of the important social transformations in recent United States history." Wilson's review of the statistics points up the growth and isolation of inter-generational poverty, but we scarcely need the reminder. With the homeless on our sidewalks, public housing an acknowledged disaster and children being raised in welfare hotels, the existence of a large segment of the American poor who stand outside the traditional working class is widely taken for granted. Sensitive issues such as single motherhood and ghetto crime are now being raised by black politicians, many of whom advocate social democratic programs along the lines Wilson has been proposing (listen to Jesse Jackson's 1988 campaign!). Even critics such as Adolph Reed, who continue to attack Wilson's emphasis on family structure as "patriarchal" and see his political proposals as limited "technocratic liberalism," concede that his economic solutions are "a practical first step" towards addressing a very real problem.[6]

5. See, for example, John Irwin, *Jail: Managing the Underclass in American Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

6. Adolph Reed, Review of Wilson, *The Nation*, Vol. 246, No. 5 (February, 1988).

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Wilson has also been tolerably well received on the Left because, in contrast to the conservatives who have dominated the discussion of poverty in recent years, he insists on connecting the crisis of poverty to processes in the larger economy. He rejects the glib misuse of the term "underclass" as synonymous with all poverty or with all black poverty. In 1940, he notes, the vast majority of black Americans were poor, yet there was no underclass. Almost all black adults were in the labor force. Most black children lived in two-parent families and in multi-class communities. The "underclass" (if the term is to be more than the racist euphemism that Wilson's critics fear it may become) refers to something specific: the growth of economically-isolated communities. Wilson argues that underclass poverty is different, that the everyday life of the group is outside the social and economic mainstream. However, he insists that the existence of this group is ultimately a result of structural economic changes. Thus, for Wilson, the problems of the underclass can only be addressed in the context of the larger economy.

The Truly Disadvantaged consists of three interconnected arguments. The first is a reflection on the discussion of poverty in American social science and policy circles from the mid-1960s to the present. Specifically, Wilson seeks to explain how it was that, after rediscovering American poverty and placing it near the top of the political agenda in the early 1960s, Left liberals and even socialist thinkers abandoned the field at the decade's end, leaving conservatives to win policy debates virtually by default. Second, Wilson puts forward his own argument as to why black poverty has grown since the late 1960s. Finally, aware of the misuse conservatives have made of his earlier work, he puts forward his own policy recommendations emphasizing full employment and a tight labor market.

The first of these arguments grows directly from the debate over the *Declining Significance of Race*, yet Wilson traces it further back, to the controversy that surrounded the Moynihan report of 1965. Poverty, he recalls, burst onto the American consciousness in the early 1960s when Galbraith's "affluent society" was rudely awakened by the civil rights movement's new-found interest in poverty and the publication of Michael Harrington's *The Other America*. Early studies of the poor, particularly the black poor, took it for granted that poverty was not an ennobling experience. Kenneth Clark (later a sharp critic of Wilson), Lee Rainwater and Elliot Liebow all believed that poverty could cause "a tangle of pathology" that would contribute to keeping the poor poor. By the mid-1960s several civil rights leaders, certainly Bayard Rustin and more arguably, Martin Luther King Jr., were in agreement. Liberals and conservatives of this era both thought it appropriate to examine the behavior of the poor as a relevant factor in the study of poverty: but with a crucial difference. While conservatives tended to emphasize the poor's own failings as the chief cause of their problems (they were much enamored of Oscar Lewis's notion of a "culture of poverty"[7]),

7. This is ironic, for Lewis was no conservative. He believed that structural changes were one way out of the "culture of poverty," and at one point heralded the salutary effects of the Cuban revolution on that nation's underclass.

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liberals maintained that, whatever its behavioral manifestations, poverty was ultimately caused by a lack of economic opportunity and structural economic changes were a necessary, if not sufficient step towards its elimination.

Then came the Moynihan report with its unflattering depiction of the "matriarchal" black family. In the rush to defend the black family, and later other aspects of black life, numerous talented researchers turned their attention to the positive aspects of ghetto culture and to expose the biases of victim-blaming "white social science." Those of a more sociological bent insisted that ghetto families, far from being defective nuclear units, functioned as female-based "kin networks" and were in fact creative adaptations to the oppressive conditions of black life. The more anthropologically-inclined described black female-centered families as continuous with an African past. Feminist critics asked what was wrong with female-headed households in the first place. On the whole, ghetto culture was praised. "Since the focus was exclusively on black achievement," Wilson notes "little attention was paid to differences within the black community. Moreover, since the problems were defined in racial terms, very little attention was devoted to . . . the problems created by economic shifts. . . ." (p. 9).

Thus, in a remarkable case of intellectual sleight of hand, essentially conservative positions emphasizing the primacy of cultural continuity were redefined as radical. Positions stressing the importance of economic inequality were labelled conservative and attacked as racist. Liberals who had nothing good to say about the ghetto generally said nothing at all. As a result, "for a period of several years the deteriorating social and economic conditions of the ghetto underclass were not addressed by the liberal community, as scholars backed away from research on the topic, policy makers were silent and civil rights leaders were preoccupied with the affirmative action agenda of the black middle class" (p. 15).[8]

Perhaps Wilson dismisses this period's defenders of black life too easily. Many of their studies were more subtle than his quick review implies.[9] If they

8. This denial of the importance of class presented even trickier problems for the Marxian Left. One solution was a revival of the "Black Nation" thesis popularized by the American Communist Party during the 1930s. Yet the notion that the black middle class functioned as the vanguard of a proletarianized "nation" or "internal colony" made increasingly less sense as class divisions within the black community became more profound. A more fruitful Marxian approach drew on Gramsci, DuBois and Oliver Cox in asserting the autonomy of racism as a cultural practice aligned with but not reducible to class systems of exploitation (see, for example, Cornel West, "Towards a Socialist Theory of Racism," Institute for Democratic Socialism). While this made for richer social critique, it had virtually no influence on policy-oriented research.

9. See, e.g., Carol Stack's *All Our Kin* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974). Stack's description of female-based kin networks in a midwestern ghetto is undoubtedly overly romantic. Yet she is astute enough to note that, precisely because the kin network was an adaptation to the economic instability of ghetto life, it effectively sabotaged individual upward mobility. The implication is that only a change in opportunity structure for the entire group will change individual behavior, a conclusion not that far from Wilson's. The networks studied by Stack, however, were headed by first generation immigrants from the south — a phenomenon that was already passing from the scene.

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were preoccupied with providing corrective dominant views, we should remember that some corrections were indeed called for. Yet he is surely right about the consequences of the Moynihan debate. Practically nobody was doing research on the ghetto by the mid 1970s. Whatever the advantages or disadvantages of the life styles Moynihan criticized, the entire debate was quickly being made irrelevant by enormous changes in the class structure of black America. Yet, at the very moment the isolation of the underclass was mounting, liberals, in part out of fear of being labelled racists, hesitated to comment on life in the ghetto.

Conservatives showed no such hesitation. As the problems of ghetto poverty, crime and family dissolution grew during the 1970s, the political support for anti-poverty programs and to some extent for civil rights fell away. Libertarian-influenced conservative spokesmen such as George Gilder and Charles Murray insisted that far from helping the poor, governmental anti-poverty efforts were actually the cause of most of their problems. This "white middle class folk wisdom" (as Murray put it) became something close to dogma in Washington during the early Reagan years.

Wilson rejects this notion. He deftly picks apart the "welfare as a cause of poverty" argument on a variety of empirical and conceptual grounds, the most telling of which is the simple fact that poverty and welfare dependency continued to increase during the 1970s, while welfare benefits were rapidly declining in real terms. This is all, of course, quite familiar ground for anyone who has been following the welfare policy debates of the last few years, and perhaps too much of *The Truly Disadvantaged* is taken up with beating what one would have hoped was by now a reasonably dead horse. Wilson devotes an entire chapter specifically to skewering Murray, a project that is probably no longer necessary. As Wilson himself notes in a later chapter, Murray's *Losing Ground* made a very big splash for a very short time. Yet its policy recommendations are no longer taken seriously even among conservatives.

If not welfare, is racism then the explanation for the increase in black poverty in the 1970s? Wilson concedes that it may be a contributing factor. Softening his position somewhat, he is careful to note that racism has certainly not disappeared from the American scene and he specifically states his support for affirmative action programs. Yet racism can hardly explain why the circumstances of a substantial minority of black Americans deteriorated rapidly, while many other blacks made new inroads into the American mainstream. Further, to borrow a note from Wilson's critics, even if racial conflict increased during the 1980s (the point is debatable), much of that conflict now takes place in arenas scarcely open to blacks in the 1960s: electoral politics, changing neighborhoods and elite college campuses. At the same time the ghettos, with the exception of a few brief, brutal explosions, have been smoldering in eerie silence.

In important ways, the black middle class and the black poor have traded places during the last two decades. The minuscule old black middle class, stingingly portrayed by E. Franklin Frazier, has left its enclave within an all black world and, along with upwardly mobile members of the black working

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class, has entered into direct competition with whites. Simultaneously, the black poor, who had long borne the brunt of exploitative contact with whites, are now increasingly isolated. Outside the labor force, living in public housing ghettos within larger black ghettos, the underclass has less and less contact with whites, save for the police, school teachers and welfare bureaucrats (and by the 1980s many of these were black). It is not hard to understand why middle class black intellectuals and politicians reacted to Wilson's original thesis as violently as they did: surely the significance of race in *their* lives was not declining! Yet this fact only serves to underscore Wilson's central point: the growing bifurcation of the black community.

But if not race or welfare, what then accounts for the underclass' isolation? Wilson argues that it is the result of a combination of economic factors, reinforced by cultural ones. A long history of discrimination has left many blacks and hispanics at a competitive disadvantage in the labor market due to poor education, a lack of job skills and racism. Yet these disadvantages only became truly devastating when combined with a declining inner city labor market after roughly 1969. Throughout the 1970s and early 1980s there existed a fatal combination of moderately high national unemployment rates with a drastic decline in the number of unskilled positions in traditional blue collar industries located in urban areas. This problem was compounded by demographics: by 1977 the median age for urban whites was 30.3; for blacks, 23.9; for hispanics, 21.8 (today the gap is even wider). Thus more and more urban black and hispanic youth were competing for fewer and fewer entry level unskilled jobs. Labor force participation fell off sharply. By 1984 only 58% of black males 20-24 were employed, "a problem of joblessness for young black men that has reached catastrophic proportions" (p. 43).

With the decline in young male employment came a sharp decline in what Wilson terms the "marriageable male pool" — the proportion of young black men in a position to support a family. As a result, poor black families were increasingly headed by young women dependent on very poor wages in the lowest rungs of the service sector, or on welfare benefits which were also declining sharply during this period. At the same time, poverty became more concentrated. By 1980 only 15% of poor blacks and 20% of poor hispanics in the five largest cities lived outside what the census department considered poverty areas. By contrast, 68% of poor whites lived in non-high poverty areas. The result of this concentration is that poverty becomes more intractable for reasons partially cultural and psychological; the lack of role models for the young, the lack of family stability, etc.; but also for reasons that are more social and political. School systems, for example, are often unable to meet the extraordinary demands of such areas. Formal and informal community institutions are put under great strain by having to serve so many truly needy families.

Economic isolation is also self-reinforcing. The underclass is mismatched for those jobs becoming available both in terms of skills and location, as service sector employment increasingly shifts to suburbs ever more inaccessible without an

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automobile. Today, in parts of the country where the labor market is tight, low wage jobs in the service sector frequently go begging. Yet the underclass seldom hears about these jobs and generally cannot get to them if they do. Among the best resources for finding jobs, getting jobs and keeping jobs are friends and relatives who have jobs. By the end of the 1970s, these were in critically short supply in many inner cities. "Even in those situations where job vacancies become available in an industry near or within an inner city neighborhood," Wilson notes, "workers who live outside the inner city may find out about these vacancies sooner than those who live near the industry because the latter are not tied into the job network." (p. 60)

Wilson probably goes too far downplaying the role of race in these transitions. It is hard, for example, to explain the growth of new industry in Atlanta's all white suburbs, or the location of new auto plants in the mostly white Tennessee hill country, without reference to race. One certainly cannot explain the suburban resistance to mass transit systems that might bring the underclass to the jobs, without reference to race. Yet this exaggeration may be a strategic one. Wilson rejects race specific explanations, one suspects, because he rejects race specific solutions. *The Truly Disadvantaged* is a book written to influence public policy, and Wilson is convinced that only policies aimed at creating full employment for all can pull the underclass out of its profound social isolation.

Wilson also clearly (and courageously) notes that cultural factors do play a role in rendering the underclass unable to take advantage of economic opportunities when they do arise. The isolation of the underclass is indeed reinforced by the prevalence of single parent families. One need not, after all, be a racist or a sexist to appreciate the tremendous economic difficulties that are likely to befall families headed by the people who command the lowest wages in the US: youths, blacks, women. Nor is it inappropriate, given the shamefully inadequate level of support American society provides them, to be concerned about the well being of children raised in such families. Without a vast increase in the amount of available day care, it is unrealistic to expect the mothers of small children to be in the labor force, and with the high rates of young male unemployment there is little reason for these young women to marry their children's fathers. As a result many children are raised in households not only poor, but having little contact with anyone steadily employed. Wilson is one of the first non-conservative authors since Moynihan to attack this problem head-on.

Yet if Moynihan was right about the danger the number of female-headed households posed, it is now clear that he was wrong about the reasons why they exist. Neither cultural patterns dating from slavery (as Moynihan and Frazier would have it) nor African retentions (as some of their critics asserted) provide a plausible explanation for the staggering growth in the number of female-headed households *since the 1960s*.[10] Nor does the notion of matrafocal kin networks hold up in light of the current situation. Wilson points out that not only are

10. Indeed, Herbert Gutman has shown that blacks overwhelmingly lived in two-parent families in the period immediately following emancipation and up to the 1920s.

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poor black families increasingly female-headed (as are poor white families, though to a lesser extent), but that they are also getting smaller and are headed by ever younger women. He insists that the causes of contemporary problems lie neither in culture nor in history but in contemporary economic dislocations.

Ironically, the partial victories of the civil rights movement also contributed to the underclass' plight, albeit indirectly. The traditional black ghetto, prior to, say, 1965, was a multi-class ghetto. The small black middle class and larger black working class were barred by racism from living anywhere else. Thus they shared these crowded communities with the poor. Then, in the 1960s, the mutually reinforcing trends of urban decay, public housing policies that concentrated the poorest of the poor in the inner city, and increasing opportunities to move elsewhere, led to an exodus of the black middle class from the ghetto. By the early 1980s, in most US cities the underclass had many communities all to itself. This was more devastating than has generally been appreciated. In a multi-class ghetto, Wilson writes, "even if the truly disadvantaged . . . experience a significant increase in long term spells of joblessness, the basic institutions in that area (churches, schools, stores, recreational facilities etc.) would remain viable . . . (as) their support base comes from the more economically stable and secure families. Moreover, the very presence of these families during such periods provides mainstream role models that help keep alive the perception that education is meaningful, that steady employment is a viable alternative to welfare, that family stability is the norm rather than the exception." (p. 56)

Here Wilson shows himself a true heir to the Chicago tradition, for he implies that communities are the relevant unit of analysis in discussions of poverty. It is one thing, after all, to grow up poor or fatherless, or in unstable surroundings. A fair number of people have always done so. It is quite another to grow up in an institution-less community, where everyone is poor, instability is the norm, and the social role of fatherhood is largely forgotten. The long unfashionable notion of social disorganization may have been inappropriately applied to immigrant communities by the early Chicago sociologists. Yet Wilson argues convincingly, that it has a place in the discussion of the underclass today.

One weakness in *The Truly Disadvantaged* is a lack of new descriptive material on these underclass communities. American sociology cut its teeth on ethnographic accounts of urban life, yet this tradition has all but died, particularly where the poor are concerned (when was the last widely read ethnography of a poor urban neighborhood by a sociologist or anthropologist published?). Even with the renewed attention paid to the underclass, most of the descriptions we have are the work of journalists. At best such accounts are unsophisticated;[11] at

11. Nicholas Lemann's *Atlantic Monthly* cover story, "The Origins of the Underclass" (June, 1986), while never crediting Wilson, does a reasonable job of attaching real faces to the Wilson thesis. Yet, despite consistently finding that black poverty increases with the length of time in the north, Lemann advances the absolutely bizarre hypothesis that the underclass represents a culture of dependence that is a direct outgrowth of a southern share cropper culture of dependence.

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worst they are lurid, or laced with an exasperated "what *are* we to do with these people?" tone. Yet there is a profound story to be told here, and it deserves a better chronicler than American social science has yet provided. The bifurcation of the black community is still an historically recent occurrence. Families and friends ended up on both sides of that divide. Thus far the best accounts of what this has meant come from the novelist, John Wideman.

To his credit, Wilson does not berate the black middle class for leaving their brethren behind. He realizes (as many black separatists do not) that the problems of the underclass are fundamentally problems of the national economy. They could not be solved by the black middle class, regardless of its actions. Yet while he refuses to blame the black middle class, he also points out that the growth of that class does not automatically benefit the poor. Affirmative action and anti-discrimination programs have made the US a fairer and better society. They should be supported. Yet it is economically naive to assume the benefits of such programs will automatically trickle down to the underclass. "I believe that we would not improve health care of the ghetto underclass . . . if we tripled the number of black physicians . . . (T)he ultimate determinant of black access to medical care is not the supply of black physicians . . . but the availability of programs such as Medicare, Medicaid, National Health Insurance, or other benefits designed, regardless of race, to give people who lack economic resources access to expensive medical care . . ." (p. 116)

What then is to be done? Wilson emphasizes the need for universal (as opposed to race specific) entitlement programs and macroeconomic policies to promote a tight labor market. He acknowledges that a tight labor market alone is not the answer to the problems of the underclass (the case of eastern Massachusetts is instructive in this regard), but he insists that programs specific to the underclass, while important, have little chance of success without it. To put it bluntly, the underclass really are less desirable employees, for a host of reasons including both their own characteristics and employer racism. But in a tighter labor market this would simply matter less. Employers would be less choosey. Within the context of that tight labor market, job training, Head Start and other ghetto specific programs have a chance to be effective. Without it, such programs are doomed to failure, or at best, will simply circulate individuals in and out of the underclass.

In addition, Wilson calls for non-means tested measures to expand the welfare state. History has shown that, in the US means-tested programs, such as Aid to Families with Dependent Children, have tended to become stigmatized and politically unpopular. On the other hand, universal programs such as social security, make a great deal of difference in the lives of the poor, yet generally enjoy broad political support among the non-poor as well. Wilson argues that an expansion of such universal entitlement programs into child care, health care and even direct job creation would vastly improve the conditions of the underclass. Yet such programs might be supported by many

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Americans who oppose race specific measures. In contrast to the neoliberals, who attack "wasteful" government spending on the middle class, Wilson sees universal programs as politically necessary to build the consensus needed to address the problems of the underclass.

None of this would qualify as radical in Western Europe. It does, however, put Wilson outside the liberal mainstream in this country. A recent *Washington Monthly* cover story lauded Wilson's analysis, but then criticized his universalistic full employment proposals as a "sneak attack" on a problem that requires a "frontal assault." What do the neoliberals consider a "frontal assault"? Ghetto specific programs, whose political support would stem from liberal idealism. Where is this idealism to come from? Here the *Monthly*'s Jason Deparle nostalgically invokes the "tough" leadership of (get this) Robert Kennedy (!).[12]

On the first reading, Wilson's call for an expanded welfare state, while absolutely necessary, was politically unfeasible in the face of tax cut mania and the mega-deficit. After reading the supposedly pragmatic neoliberal reaction, I had a new-found respect for Wilson's political savvy. Certainly his social democratic politics, which are based in mutual interest, are no more a fantasy than calling for a revival of paternalistic idealism. An expanded New Deal is a more promising political program than a renewed New Frontier. Certainly the Keynesian solutions of an earlier time are no longer adequate, and much more work on the economics of an expanded welfare state is necessary. Yet Wilson has, I think, put us on the right track.

There is another reason to recommend *The Truly Disadvantaged*. We have heard a great deal lately about the decline of the public intellectual. On the Left, in particular, many who once spoke out on public issues are today devoted to obscure scholarly themes or dedicated to treating social life as the stuff of literary criticism. Wilson is a man of the Left who defies these trends. Without sacrificing one bit of his scholarly rigor, he writes for a broad audience on public issues of real importance. Not too many tenured professors of sociology are doing that these days. In facing up to the underclass, Wilson explicitly challenges liberals to move beyond the free market assumptions of the Reagan era. He also implicitly challenges the Left to break out of its own cultural isolation, to move beyond the radical sounding parlor games of the academic ghetto. That alone makes *The Truly Disadvantaged* a truly important piece of work.

Philip Kasinitz

12. Jason Deparle, "In The Ghetto: Where RFK was. Where Today's Candidates Should Be." *The Washington Monthly*, Vol. 20, No. 2. (March, 1988).

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Beyond the American Dream

Mike Davis, *Prisoners of the American Dream* (London: Verso, 1986), 320pp.

A well-liked and even legendary former Southern California SDS activist, currently an editor of *New Left Review*, Davis has written a thoughtful and lively Marxist polemic which manages to touch on just about every aspect of American politics. (To refresh memories, Davis was the SDSer who rented the run down house on USC's fraternity row for the L.A. SDS headquarters, corresponded with Marcuse, and held exciting roof-top political discussions). Davis' book is sub-titled "Politics and Economy in the History of the U.S. Working Class." That book can be found in *Prisoners of the American Dream*, but there are others here as well. Occasionally the writing is as obtuse as the sub-title, while at other times Davis can be nearly as lucid as C. Wright Mills and just as engaging.

Labor history was high on the list for study group topics in SDS circles. Some former activists have made academic careers out of the Left's interest in the history of American workers. The belief that the radicalization of workers would be decisive and that student militancy would seem like so much schoolyard fun in comparison was pervasive in the New Left. The proponents of what C. Wright Mills called "the labor metaphysic" have never ceased to emphasize the combativeness of the US working class. But they have also had to deal with American exceptionalism or the absence in US history of a strong labor party and the numerous failed attempts to create one. This is the central question Davis addresses in the first section of his book.

In his opening chapter, "Why the U.S. Working Class is Different," Davis identifies three factors that were crucial in fragmenting the working class: 1) the urban industrial frontier; 2) nativism and cultural divisions of the US proletariat; 3) racism. Some idea of the approach Davis takes to this historical question can be ascertained by examining his remarks on the major role of religious consciousness in the US working class: "Protestantism, for instance, was not merely a majority religion in ante-bellum America; it was also directly constitutive of popular republican nationalism. As Rhys Issac and others have shown, popular support for the American revolution was the product of a 'double ideological eruption,' as patriotic rebellion against Parliament was legitimated by the rise of a radical evangelicalism that translated the 'rights of man' through the idiom of perfectionist Protestantism." (p. 22)

American workers never developed an anti-clerical tradition like their French

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counterparts, for example, because they never faced a state sponsored church or aristocracy. As a result, "ethno-religious cleavages" were the dominant factors in party identification and voting patterns between 1870 and 1932. These facts call for some tricky theoretical work by Davis: "Rather than banishing class struggle from center-stage, these studies only challenge Marxists to theorize more rigorously the refraction of class differences through a singular American ethno-religious prism." (p. 17) Anderson's comments on the failure of Marxists to understand religion, "strange historical object *par excellence*,"[1] have undoubtedly inspired Davis' own research.

Davis continues his historical account in the following chapter on "American Labor and the Democratic Party," a competent retelling of a familiar story. The remaining pages, well over half the book, deal with recent trends in US capitalism. While charting the decline of the labor movement, Davis now shifts his attention to the policital economy of Reaganism. For readers not sharing the Left's obsession with working class history, and fortunately for Davis, the book livens up considerably once it is outside the factory gates.

Davis writes with passion and intelligence about the origins of Reaganism. Southern California's Orange County was the Transylvania of the New Right. As Davis explains, California's referendum and initiative process gave rise to the Right's power base, which relies on mass advertising and mail solicitations. He provides a brief history of the initiative system, tracing its roots back to Progressivism. The Reagan counterrevolution began rolling with the initiative campaigns centering on integrated housing (1964-65), the death penalty (1965, 1976), farm labor (1972), school busing (1979), and property taxes (1978).

The growth of the Right in the 1970s took place against the backdrop of massive capital flight from the northeast to the sun-belt. "The seventies witnessed the most rapid and large-scale shift in economic power in American history," writes Davis. (p. 171) He also cites the startling fact that McDonalds now employs more workers than the steel industry. Davis also makes the interesting point that the economic shift produced a new generation of Right-wing expansionist capitalists with interests in the Middle East and Mexico/Central America. (p. 172) He provides an overview of the New Right economy, describing its dependence on defense spending and its pursuit of superprofits in hi-tech, energy reserves, financial services and real estate. "The overall trend is toward an unprecedented disarticulation of the military, political, industrial and monetary instances of American hegemony. Whereas in the older Cold War era, American world power was based on a coherent interlacing of nuclear monopoly, monetary sovereignty, domestic reform and national productivity, sustained by mass purchasing power, today this configuration is increasingly disassembled: military buildup appears as a surrogate for, not a correlate of, economic growth, and the ability to consume becomes more detached from the actual movement of productivity." (p. 181)

1. Perry Anderson, *Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism* (London:1974), p. 131.

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Davis believes that the new hi-tech capitalism of the Pacific Rim is threatened by the underconsumption of the Asian working classes and the "mega-consumption" of the California middle-classes. He forsees a possible economic crisis in the American sun-belt and industrial East Asia, a consequence of the rapid growth of fictictious Asian capital. Unfortunately Davis cuts short his analysis of Reaganomics to leave room for a wild New Left version of the revolutionary future. Beginning from the old Communist Party premise that black liberation is "the critical democratic issue in American history," (p. 257) he goes on to resurrect the 60s vision of blacks and chicanos rising up in solidarity with revolutionary movements in the Third World: ". . . the real weak link in the domestic base of American imperialism is a black and hispanic working class fifty million strong." (p. 314)

Davis comes close to sounding like Mao's one-time heir apparent, Lin Piao: "More likely is the prospect that the current counter-revolutionary interventions in Central America are merely opening salvos in a generalized social war pitting the insurgent poor of the hemisphere against not only their local ruling classes but, increasingly, the rich classes in the North as well. . . . Even with militarized borders, this war could soon spill over into the barrios and ghettos of the US. . . ." (p. 306) Davis has recently developed this theme elsewhere: the US inner cities now resemble the native quarters in the old colonial enclaves. ". . . the burgeoning city of third world immigrants . . . totally surrounds and lays siege to the sumptuary towers of the speculators. . . ."[2] While it is true that some buildings in the financial centers resemble large fortifications, it does not follow that the citizenry is on the brink of rebellion. In the crowded discount department stores in Los Angeles, for example, the shoppers lay siege to the counters selling VCRs, cameras and stereos. It is possible to become involved in a dispute over who gets to purchase the latest model of a particular VCR, but no one is going to be found arguing about capitalism. True or not, almost everyone believes they can get ahead, even the dishwasher who arrived last week from Mexico or the sweatshop worker from Hong Kong. The destitute do not dream of a socialist utopia but of the merchandise they cannot acquire. The immigrants are not arriving with the aim of overthrowing capitalism. They want cars and color TVs like everyone else, including the anglos and the blacks.

A social conflict on the order of a continental revolt would probably involve a superpower confrontation, perhaps leading to nuclear war. Moreover, Left-wing nationalism in the Third World frequently has given rise to dictatorships that are socialist in name only. The struggles of the late 1960s in the US produced militarized political organizations (the Black Panther Party; the Weather Underground) that, while engaged in popular resistance to the state repression of the Vietnam era, were not exactly models for future liberated societies.

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2. Mike Davis, "Urban Renaissance and the Spirit of Postmodernism," *New Left Review*, 151 (May/June, 1985). p. 110.

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What is completely absent from *Prisoners of the American Dream* is a vision of social transformation that promises a truly alternative society. As Erica Sherover-Marcuse has argued in her new book, *Emancipation and Consciousness*, socialism is not just a more efficient organization of the conditions of capitalist production. The idea of a socialist society is the vision of a qualitatively different totality. Today Marxism in all its manifestations promises only one thing: economic development for the poor majority. The best outcome that could be hoped for from the international conflict foreseen by Davis would be some form of benevolent totalitarianism attempting to provide basic services to the so-called masses. It is very likely that the "revolutionary" government would be dealing with a population shattered by civil strife, one that might even harbor resentments against those who had used them as shock troops in the destruction of capitalism.

Davis refers to the "perspicacity" of Lenin in recognizing that political consciousness is not created solely by economic conditions. (p. 308) But the political instrument created by Lenin and Trotsky was a militarized political party serving only one sector of society. Erica Sherover-Marcuse suggests that today socialism must have a new appeal: "A practice of subjectivity must have a commitment to universal human liberation, and it must embody this commitment in its own theory and praxis. . . . An emancipatory subjective practice must be something which could, in principle, involve individuals from all social groups. In the late twentieth century a practice of subjectivity must be *potentially universizable*."[3]

Unfortunately, the 1980s Left is far closer in spirit to Mike Davis than to Erica Sherover-Marcuse. The 80s Left has only two reference points: Nicaragua and Cuba (Davis dedicates his book to a fallen combatant of the guerrilla war in El Salvador). Compared to the New Left of the 60s, the 80s Left is truly intellectually impoverished. David Eakins, a former editor of *Studies On The Left*, the founding journal of the New Left, and a professor of history, told an assembly of radicals at San Jose State College in the late 60s, "The trouble with the New Left is that it doesn't read." But a minority did read, and the ideas of Marcuse, Gramsci, Mao, Guevara, Debray, Deutscher, Reich and sometimes even Marx, among others, were kicked around to a wider audience in one form or another. Today, incredibly, the speeches of Fidel Castro and the day-to-day pronoucements of the embattled Sandinista Directorate are the only sources of political enlightenment. Political analysis is fixated on the CIA. The 80s Left seems to believe that capitalism is held together solely by the CIA, which is everywhere. The 80s Left has inherited the bitter legacy of paranoia from the last days of the New Left and little else. There are so few ideas around that even sectarian debates seem to be absent.

Todays Leftists have chosen to depart en masse to the current target country of US belligerence. The journey to Managua is one of deep personal solidarity and a rejection of the alienated world of Reaganism and the daily drive to the

3. Erica Sherover-Marcuse, *Emancipation and Consciousness* (New York, 1986), p. 137.

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City of Mahagony. One young professional proudly boasted on *Nightline* that his salary in Nicaragua was twelve dollars a month. Benjamin Linder, a very popular and courageous 27-year-old engineer, killed by the Contras (who may have been acting on a CIA hit list), is now an inspirational symbol to the international volunteers, the John Reed of his generation. For the American Left, Nicaragua has become a utopian colony, even a religious cause.

Perhaps the differences with the Vietnam era Left are not really all that great. Only the Left itself has become far more isolated in the Reagan years. Solidarity with the Third World has now been the motivating force of the Left for over 25 years (beginning with the Cuban Revolution). The spectacle of an arrogant superpower ravaging a poor Third World country (such as Nicaragua or Afghanistan) is bound to generate boundless moral revulsion, leaving little room for critical thinking. Radical opposition to capitalism will no doubt continue to be confined to the students and intellectuals, traditional opponents of tyranny and war. Today, as in the 60s, support for Third World revolution is centered in the intellectual ghettos such as the "student" neighborhoods near UC, Berkeley. Blacks are the only other large constituency somewhat receptive to Leftist politics (Davis provides an extensive analysis of Jackson's Rainbow Coalition). The domestic political consequences of US militarism abroad seem to be contained fairly easily within the existing system, although the likes of Lt. Col. Oliver North may indicate that somewhere down the road the US will become the world's largest banana republic.

As Davis' book illustrates, the Old Left of the working class had its day long ago (in a sense, the workers revolution actually took place in the strikes of the 30s, and nothing happened). The New Left revolution also flashed and vanished overnight, as Davis notes: "The demobilization of the movements of the 1960s was brutually sudden and is still, to many of their survivors, inexplicable." (p. 222) Today the US appears as an infinitely optimistic society, and one of overwhelming power (and incredible stupidity and callousness, as its support of the Contras and South Africa illustrates). But the accidents of war, ecological disaster, and hi-tech catastrophes appear endemic to the superpowers. And even Marxists like Mike Davis have to admit that "new or previously marginal historical actors," such as Islamic "revolutionaries," are now active on the world stage (with 350,000 dead in the Iran-Iraq war). The hi-tech era masks a return to more barbaric times.

Tom Good

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Politics and Rhetoric

Daniel T. Rodgers, *Contested Truths: Keywords in American Politics Since Independence* (New York: Basic Books, 1987).

In *Contested Truths*, Rodgers covers the American fortunes of seven words: Utilitarianism, (Natural) Rights, the People, Government, State, Interests and Freedom. To each he devotes a heavily footnoted but lightly written essay of 30-40 pages, except the last one, Freedom, which is handled in a shorter and looser epilogue. The individual essays are all carefully researched, well-written and original — especially the one on Rights. It makes an important contribution to the debate on "civic republicanism," and it should appeal to a broad audience interested in the "exceptionalism" (or lack thereof) of American politics.

There is a larger issue that Rodgers discusses very briefly in the prologue and epilogue, and this concerns the historical causes of nationally distinctive ways of political thinking. Rodgers does not elaborate much on this theoretical side of keywords, and some of his ostensive arguments, wherein certain words are shown to acquire an historical content, are better than his explicit arguments, which contain a purely instrumental conception of keywords. So while the book is evenly competent when viewed as an exercise in intellectual history, it is uneven when viewed as an exploration of this larger concern. From this perspective, the chapter on Rights is brilliant, the chapter on Interests is excellent but comes to an odd conclusion and, in the chapter on State, Rodgers seems to be fishing in the wrong pond.

There are two ways to think about key words: as keywords of *politics* — or political *rhetoric* — and as key words of *political theory*. These two usages obviously overlap, but they are not congruent. Take for example a couple of words in this book that are still key words in political rhetoric: "rights" and "interests." Both of these words have a resonance or a "ring" to them that seems to be almost independent of their place in the logic of an argument. This comes out most clearly when, in the course of the homogenized pap that passes as political debate these days, they are twisted into absurd shapes without losing their resonance, as when Reagan managed to brand women, labor and minorities as "special interests." And yet it was effective; it was the kind of insult that had to be riposted, and unriposted, stung. Political pundits are still talking about how Mondale sunk his campaign, heavy laden with such special interests, and much of the advice that swirls around the Dukakis camp turns on avoiding this lethal linkage.

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Such words seem to have a one-way emotional charge. A "community" is always good. A "special interest" is always bad. The mechanics of using such words in political struggles, as the admen who have taken over our campaigns have made quite explicit, is as "labels" that you "stick" to someone or, better, "brand" them with, so that person (or group) and label become inseparably linked in the mind of the audience for the foreseeable future.

In this context, keywords can be seen as especially important words in a larger body of tropes of political rhetoric. They are words that have endured and have been used by very different groups in different times for different ends. The theoretical question is, where do they come from? If one looks at keywords in this rhetorical sense, then it seems that we are talking about a national phenomenon. Rhetorical keywords make little sense outside their home arena. This chauvinism of political rhetoric — which it does not share with its political theory brethren — indicates that a satisfying answer for their hold on the mind of the body politic should be looked for in the particularities of national history.

The purpose of political rhetoric is to *mobilize* people, even if nowadays they are usually only mobilized to vote and acquiesce. The hypothesis that emerges from this book is that the most enduring words, the keywords, were originally slogans that were thrown into the political mix at crucial moments of the nation's history, and which proved successful in mobilizing people. Their endurance could be explained by the fact that the language of mobilization changes slowly, somewhat like the design of cathedrals did in the age of handwork, and for the same reason: the higher the stakes, the more daunting the chance the handiwork will fall flat, and the more gingerly novelty is introduced.

This is the implicit explanation of the power of such words as Rights, Interests and Freedom to be found in *Contested Truths*. These words rose to prominence during moments when the American nation-state was being annealed or re-annealed, and they have remained a structure below the surface of public debate.

The chapter entitled "Natural Rights" is a clear contribution to the debate about "civic republicanism." And on a broader view, it contributes an historical explanation for where the unique "rights culture" in America comes from. Rodgers traces a subtle inflection that the phrase "natural rights" underwent in the period 1765-1776. In the beginning, "natural" was just an adjective that could be stuck onto almost any assertion to give it added emphasis; it was added to "rights" as well during the pre-revolutionary agitation. There was also a second meaning of the phrase available which stemmed from the way the word was taught in the colonial colleges. There, "natural rights" referred to the rules God had etched in Nature. The pamphleteers and declaration writers availed themselves of this usage as well, insisting that the colonialists could claim rights that had not been written down. But while this "natural law" line of reasoning allowed a little more maneuvering space, it still would not justify revolution. Natural Law was more often used to justify kings. This sort of Natural Rights reasoning might be stretched to justify

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claims of lapsed custom. But for claims of custom to provide a precedent justifying revolution, what was necessary was at least a mythological time when there were no kings. Insurgents in Britain drew time and time again upon their "Ancient Constitution." In America, when the agitators reached back for precedents, in the place where the Ancient Constitution should have been but was not, they began to find a mythical "state of nature."

As Rodgers puts it, "Thomas Paine, long after the fact, set down the underlying dynamic of the argument. 'The error of those who reason by precedents drawn from antiquity, respecting the rights of man, is that they do not go far enough into antiquity. They do not go the whole way. They stop in some of the intermediate stages of a hundred or a thousand years, and produce what was then done as a rule for the present day.' But each precedent had its forerunner to contradict it. 'It is authority against authority all the way till we come to the divine origin of the rights of man at the creation. Here our inquiries find a resting-place, and our reason finds a home'." (p. 56-57)

But that was in 1791. Rodgers' accomplishment is to show almost the exact moment in time when this peculiar, pre-political and powerful notion of rights came into being in the penumbra of arguments made in speeches and handbills and declarations. It took shape in half-light, because in many ways it was a wacky notion even in the beginning. Certainly Rousseau and Locke did not think one could actually return to a state of nature. And neither did these men, at least up front. Yet during this crucial period there were, with increasing frequency, statements like the following, pushed through at a Boston Town meeting in 1772 by Samuel Adams, to the effect that "All Men have a Right to remain in a State of Nature as long as they please." (p. 55) It was not a thesis sentence, and it was not even so much a proposition as it was a marriage in rhetoric of a famous phrase and a background picture. In the heat of debate, the vast wilderness of America seemed to be close enough to a State of Nature that, if Union with Britain were dissolved, the settlers would be in a "state of nature" until they formed a new nation. The idea of the fictitious contract was later married in their minds to an historical act, when "we the people, in order to form a more perfect union" actually got together and formed a government and society where once there was none. Today, when people avail themselves of the language of rights to put forth demands that have previously had no place in American law, they do not use the adjective "natural." And yet, when one considers how much "nature" implied God as creator and ultimate judge in the 18th century, one can still hear echoes of that usage today in phrases such as "god-given rights."

Rodgers argues convincingly against the common notion that Americans simply imported our ideas of rights, like our ideas of everything else, from overseas. He highlights the deviances between the American way of thinking and that of Locke and Rousseau, and documents how state of nature reasoning had been falling into suspicion and disuse in Britain for some time before it was

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reborn in America. So, here is a carefully documented account of the birth of a national myth in real time. Rodgers does not spend much time speculating on *how* such keywords endure and hold their importance through entire shifts of audience, addressers and the meaning of the words. But he fixes in detail that they did. For those that do speculate on such things, this tightly argued article should become a staple resource for the study of American "political culture."

This leads to the second way to look at Keywords: as key words in political theory. These two meanings are, of course, interwoven. It was only very recently that political theory was academicized and substantially divorced from active politics. But still, there is a difference. The keywords of conceptualization are different from the keywords of mobilization. There is a different universe of concerns, and a correspondingly different pre-linguistic sense of how to order and re-order the salient cluster of terms. A word like "interest" in political theory will have a different set of background contexts and a different set of "formative moments" than the trope "special interests." Some of these background contexts will overlap; politics is always important for political theory. But one crucial difference is that, for the purposes of political theory, the background contexts of a key term will often be great books, and the historical universe of discourse will be *transnational*. So what is a virtue in the study of political rhetoric, the concentration on and restriction to a national history, can be a vice in the study of political theory.

This second notion of Keywords is the one that by and large characterizes the discussions in Raymond Williams' book, *Keywords*. And it is in part why many found it disappointing, since they opened it hoping to find key words of *politics*. Rodgers merges the two approaches without distinguishing them. This is a problem. It shows up most clearly in the chapter on "State." The history, as always, is meticulous and nuanced. But what is being described here? Words like "the People" were obviously once keywords of American politics, even if that particular one seems to have run its course. And "Government?" Well, maybe a case can be made that it mobilized a reaction; certainly Rodgers makes a good stab at it. But "State?" Has State *ever* caused American breasts to beat in unison on any side of an issue? Incomprehension, maybe. And, indeed, after reading the chapter, it turns out that it is not a matter of politics so much as the founding term of American political science. There are indeed "struggles" going on, but they are between the fledgling discipline and its rivals in law, economics and sociology. "State," in the very peculiar manner political scientists used it, is the word that seemed best suited to make the dual claim that new divisions of academic labor always seemed to make around this time (1880-1900): that they were the new "queen of sciences," and, failing that, that they had a particular "object" of study different from the objects of the other disciplines.

Rodgers does not seem to see any difference between a word like State and a word like Rights. He has, to some extent, an instrumentalist definition of meaning, under which words are mainly defined by their political use. From this he draws an analytical framework where every debate over a word's meaning can

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be mapped onto "insiders" and "outsiders" contending for power. So far, so good. But there seems to be a crucial difference between the insiders and outsiders looking at each other across the franchise, and the case when the "insiders" are political scientists who are defining their words in contradistinction to the "common sense" of amateurs.

The important issue here is that the acceptance of a word in political science jargon is not a simple reflection of its acceptance in the political arena. Despite on-going borrowing between the two realms that has only accelerated with the bureaucratization of social policy, some words of jargon serve their main purpose *as jargon*: making knowledge precious by *excluding* people from it. In the case of this kind of "keyword," its most important property is its *lack* of resonance, its utter foreign-ness to commonsense. For this reason, foreign words are often the best. The American use of the neo-Hegelian "Staat" that Rodgers describes here seems to be an excellent example of jargon acting like jargon. A contemporary example can be seen in film criticism, whose claims to expertise — and a chair — are vitally attached to a vocabulary that is has no continuity at all with the way that even intelligent people "commonly" think about movies.

Furthermore, if keywords are defined as words that "have a long and active half-life" (p.15), then the transuranian half-life of "state" should be evidence enough that it is not a keyword. Even its most ardent proponents did not believe it had much to do with the workings of the actual state when it came to the issues of the day — as Rodgers documents. But if this chapter is simply seen as a contribution to the history of the rise of the academic division of labor, not an uninteresting topic, then it has something to offer.

The effect of this unmade distinction is more frustrating in the chapter on "Interests." This is an exciting chapter, well worth re-reading. It covers a broad span of public debate during one of the formative moments of American history, when the earthworks of the welfare state were being put into place. There is a lot more here than simply the word "interests." The whole effect that the New Deal had on American ways of thinking — and hence on American political rhetoric — is covered concisely and suggestively.

On the other hand, what about "interests?" The story that Rodgers tells is not quite the story he thinks he is telling. He says that where "interests" was once a term of opprobrium, it became, during this period, a term of realistic description, and finally, a term of celebration of an unshakeable American system of government, the one where "everybody fights for the marbles, and no one group gets to swipe the whole sack." But while the notion that "competing interests" would generate the best of all possible worlds *does* seem to have taken root in America during this period, the celebratory side of it seems to have attached to the related word "pluralism" — which, like any real keyword, is always good. It is impossible to be against pluralism in the public arena. But one can certainly be against special interests, now as always.

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The confusion here comes once again from the conflation of the jargon of political science and the rhetoric of public debate. It is always a difficult matter to disentangle them. But in this particular case, the "realism" that led political scientists to start talking about "interests" reflected in part a desire to distinguish their way of thinking from sentimental and fuzzy everyday thinking — as Rodgers documents. The fact that the word had a stink of opprobrium only showed that the new academic professionals were not afraid of the facts. The same thing can be seen today in the way political "realists" use the term "elites." It is not an un-useful word; it is not simply a mystification by any means. But the zing that the word has, the aura that makes its users seem to themselves to be "realists," comes precisely from how their usage flies in the face of the common American connotations, where the idea of elites — more often met with in the term "elitist" — is always bad.

Furthermore, it is especially difficult to disentangle the two threads of politics and political science in periods like the New Deal and the Sixties, when academics in government are celebrated to some extent, and they deploy their jargon in public hearings in the name of this or that cause. Nonetheless, Rodgers' conclusion about the final value of "interests" seems a little odd, even in light of the evidence he presents for it; there is a lot more opprobrium to be found in this chapter than celebration. Maybe in the final analysis, it is not that important. This chapter is still good intellectual history of an important time in American history and it makes many suggestive points. And good intellectual history is hard to do in America, because people that want to historicize political thinking do not have a text-bound tradition to react *against*. Historians like Rodgers must patch together a text out of state assemblies and handbills before they can even begin to analyze in it in terms of social forces. And he has carried out this task with skill and insight.

Michael Pollak

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